THE F E OF JOHN

GOD RE IGHT, AND LOVE

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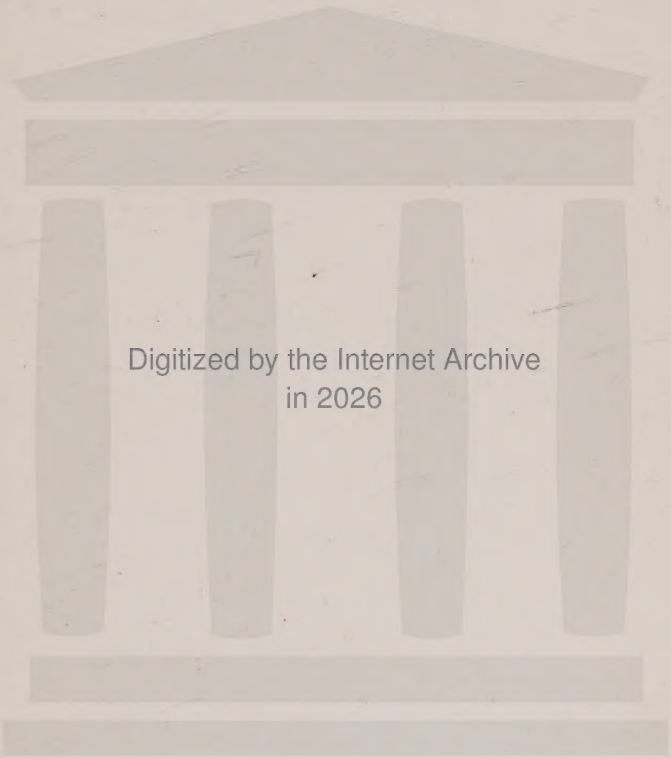
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THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

The First Epistle of John

OR

GOD REVEALED IN LIFE, LIGHT, AND LOVE

BY

ROBERT CAMERON

Author of "The Doctrine of the Ages," and Editor of "Watchword and Truth"

These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.—The Apostle John.

PHILADELPHIA

A. J. ROWLAND—1420 Chestnut Street

1899

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PREFACE

THIS series of studies upon the First Epistle of John is the outgrowth of two convictions: First, that this Epistle has much valuable truth for the upbuilding of the Christian life; secondly, that no condensed and connected development of the truth contained in the book has been published for many years. Students of the Bible have often spoken of their difficulty in understanding this Epistle. The writer confesses that he had a similar experience himself. When he first began to study the book he could say with an ancient author: "I am far from understanding all; I read, but it seems to me as if what John meant were floating before me in the distance, and even when I look into a passage altogether dark, I have a foretaste of some great, glorious meaning which I shall some day understand." The simplicity of the language in which the majesty and the depth of thought of this Epistle are expressed has hindered that careful study of this book needed to trace its connecting links. The profound mysteries of the relation between God on the one hand, and the world, the soul of man, the evil one, deceiving spirits, and the coming Antichrist, on the other, are stated in language adapted to the understanding of a little child. But they challenge the most profound

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consideration of those who are deeply taught of God, for they all have their roots in the unseen, the everlasting, and the absolute Source of Life.

This apparent hiding of the meaning is not a matter of wonder. Life in its essence has never been discovered. Its phenomena are all we know. This book treats of life—life in God, revealed through Christ, and imparted to us. Its structure is in harmony with its theme, as is always the case in the word of God. All the words used in Scripture, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, show a sympathetic capacity to deal with the truth under consideration never found in other writings. This is strikingly seen in the Gospel and Epistles of John as well as in the Apocalypse. The writer has sought to trace the course of these vital undercurrents of life pressing their way through the whole book.

The text used, in the main, is that of the Revised version. Hence there is no discussion of some of the mistranslations or unfortunate insertions that appear in our King James version of this Epistle. The writer has sought, however, to get at the fundamental meaning of the book through the Greek text, without explaining the process, and without troubling the reader with too frequent reference to the original. The truth thus ascertained, he has sought to make known in the exposition. He has made it a constant aim to force nothing into the text, although he is conscious of having evolved from the text but a small portion of its wealth and worth. On the whole, he ventures to ex-

press the hope that the reader who follows him, will be led into the secrets of the great life which throbs in every portion of this book, the richest of all the writings of the beloved disciple. In this confidence these studies are now laid at the Master's feet with the earnest prayer that they may be used to unfold his glories and to feed the souls of the saints.

Grateful acknowledgment is made for valuable help derived from the writings of Canon Westcott, Doctor Candlish, Doctor Culross, J. N. Darby, W. Lincoln, and, in a less degree, from F. D. Maurice. Special mention should be made of Doctors Stifler and Morehead, from whom the author has derived valuable suggestions.

R. C.

PROVIDENCE, R. I., April, 1899.

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INTRODUCTION

From an internal examination of this Epistle we find the following facts: The man who wrote it had seen, heard, and handled Jesus, the Christ. The word "handled" makes it plain that he is writing of a person and not of a doctrine. He was advanced in years and could speak of the disciples as "little children." He had a spirit of tender, yearning love toward those who had been brought to the Lord through his ministry. He had conscious fellowship with the Father and with the Son. He wished others to share in the same blessings with himself. He knew and believed the love that God had toward him. He knew that he was of God, that he was in God, and that God was abiding in him. He was one whose ministry had been received by the children of God, but not by the world. The persons to whom he wrote were believers; their sins were forgiven; they knew Christ; they knew the truth; they had overcome the wicked one; they had the anointing of the Holy Spirit; they were the writer's own spiritual children; and they were the people who were in the midst of false teachers. Some of them lacked assurance, some of them had persecutions to bear, and some of them were very much perplexed about the false doctrines. Among other things they had been taught:

That Jesus was not the Christ, that he had not come in the flesh, that a man might habitually live in sin and yet claim to be born of God, that man did not need the atoning blood, and that men might live together in hatred and yet claim to be in fellowship with God. These things all point to John as the author of this book.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that John's authorship has never been seriously disputed. Irenæus, who knew Polycarp, a contemporary of John, says that John was its author. This conclusion would easily be gathered from its relation to the Gospel bearing that apostle's name. The one is a synopsis of the life and discourses of our Lord, while the other is an exposition of their significance. In John's Gospel, we have in the first fourteen verses, life with the Father, and in the rest, life manifested. The Epistle fits into the Gospel thus framed, showing the additional truth of life imparted to us. In the closing verses of chap. 20 of the Gospel, John says, "I have written that ye might believe, and that believing ye might have life," while in the last chapter of the Epistle he says, "I have written that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." And in both the Gospel and the Epistle, the possession of life and the knowledge of the life possessed are for the purpose of giving us fullness of joy. There is such a striking likeness in the style and vocabulary of the Gospel and the Epistle that one would readily ascribe the authorship of both books to the same person. The words life, light, love, joy, truth, word, world, witness,

born, abide, advocate, and so forth, are constantly recurring words in both the Gospel and the Epistle.

There is in this Epistle the same absence of systematic arrangement of surface facts and truths seen in the Gospel bearing John's name. But it is not "the rambling prattle of an old man" pouring out pious phrases. It is rather the words of one so long with God on the mount of communion that his words dazzle us with their brightness. He plunges at once into his great theme of the revelation made to man in the Son of God. He reflects the spirit of him in whose bosom he lay at the last supper. Ewald, speaking of his "unruffled and heavenly repose," says: "It appears to be the tone, not so much of a father talking with his beloved children, as of a glorified saint addressing mankind from a higher world. Never has the doctrine of heavenly love, working in stillness, ever unwearied, never exhausted, so thoroughly approved itself as in this Epistle." This path of life flowing out in unsullied light and heavenly love is not readily detected. It is upon the inner essence and not upon the outer aspect of the Christian life that John chiefly dwells; but in the Epistle he follows a well-defined path, all the way from the revelation of God in Christ at the beginning to the exhortation to guard ourselves from idols at the end.

It is also quite certain that the Epistle was written in Ephesus. Irenæus declares this without qualification, and the early traditions of the church are unanimous to this effect. Polycrates, in speaking of the ashes of the saints sleeping at Ephesus, mentions,

among others, those of John the apostle ; showing that in his day this was the unanimous feeling and belief of the church. The book of Revelation speaks of Patmos near Ephesus. It is quite certain that John wrote the last book of the New Testament on that island. It is not without significance that the name now given to the spot where Ephesus once flourished is Diasolouk, which means the holy theologian. While there is not a very great deal of reliance to be placed upon this name, still it indicates that some holy man gave to the city his name, which has been preserved until the present time among the natives.

But the book itself fits into the condition of things at Ephesus. The warning against idolatry with which the writer closes the Epistle corresponds to the state of things which existed in Ephesus, as recorded in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, showing us how much this city was given to idolatry. The warnings against unseen and wicked spirits[1] had a special significance to the people of that city.[2] The broad scope of the book answers to the cosmopolitan character of the city of Ephesus. Then too, the language used in the Epistle presupposes teachers having labored in Ephesus, and this corresponds to the facts in the case. Thus both internal examination and also the early history and traditions of the church point to "that disciple whom Jesus loved" as the author of this wonderful treatise on life as revealed in our Lord and imparted to the family of faith.

[1] 4 : 1. [2] Eph. 6 : 12 ; Acts 19 : 13–16.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

CHAPTER I

THE UNSEEN REVEALED

1 John 1 : 1–4

It is often observed that John has left us three great pictures. The first is that of our Lord, as he lay in the bosom of a Father's love from the eternity of the past. This we find in the Gospel bearing his name. The second picture is that of his own heart in its secret relation to Christ, and this is identical with the experience of every regenerate soul in fellowship with the Lord. The three Epistles give us this. The third picture is that of God's judgments sweeping away the disease and death of the present earth, and introducing the new heavens and the new earth. The Apocalypse gives us this. It is the second of these pictures that we are to study in this Epistle.

It is an interesting fact that we find the law of compensation illustrated in the case of the Ephesian church. The preaching of the gospel in Ephesus resulted in the burning of a large number of books.[1] These books were pernicious and evil, and it was well that they were destroyed. But the gospel, which was

[1] Acts 19 : 19.

the cause of their destruction, brought in a large amount of Christian literature. There were eight of these volumes in all : John's Gospel, Apocalypse, and three Epistles ; a letter of Paul to the Ephesians, and two letters to his "son," Timothy. This is another illustration of that wonderful law of the kingdom by which "he that loseth his life for Christ's sake shall find it." The Ephesians lost what was proving their ruin, while they gained that which became their salvation. They lost the books of evil spirits, but gained those from the Holy Spirit ; they lost the books of deception, but received the book of truth.

We may assume that this treatise was written to the Ephesians. We shall find great advantages in looking at it as a whole. The sweetest scents come, not from the flower of the aromatic plant, but from its leaves, its stem, its seed, and its bark, all macerated and compounded into one. These various parts contain odoriferous substances in minute sacks, and combine to give the rarest perfume that can be obtained. So the purest and most fragrant doctrines come from the whole substance of a book in the Scriptures, and not from a minute flower or single text. It is only when we can thus mass together the whole book, each part of it as it is related to the rest, that we shall have the name of Christ presented to us as "ointment poured forth."

We call this an epistle. Perhaps it is. But it does not open like a letter, it does not close like a letter, and it has no personal allusions or greetings like a letter. "These things write we unto you, that our joy may be

full,'' partakes somewhat of the nature of a letter's greetings. Yet it is rather a brief treatise unfolding the soul of John in its experience under the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This treatise would have a peculiar meaning to the Ephesian church. It ought to have such a meaning to us. It came from the last living representative of that select company who heard, saw, gazed upon, and handled our Lord, after his resurrection from the dead. He was therefore the last one of the twelve apostles to correct any wrong statements and wrong reports concerning the person and work of our adorable Redeemer.

John speaks of "*That which was from the beginning.*" It was not that which came into existence, but which already existed—which was. He writes in an impersonal way. This was evidently because he wanted to set self aside, and to get back to the living God and to the life which was in him. He joins eternity to life, and joins life to God when speaking about eternity, and this life was with the Father. This, it will be observed, is the same spirit found in the first eighteen verses of the Gospel by John. Here, we have the eternity of Christ and his unity with the Father as definitely taught as in the Gospel. This life was manifested—*heard, seen, gazed upon, handled.* While the Greeks were "feeling after God" in the dark, John "*handled*" his manifestation in the light, alluding to scenes before and after the resurrection. This was John's emphatic way of treating the reality of the

manifestation of Christ as opposed to some false teachers of that day, who maintained that the incarnation was a mere shadow and not a reality. This is as timely now as then. Does not "Christian Science" deny the real incarnation to-day? In this day of doubt and demand for scientific demonstration, do we not need to be reminded afresh that twelve common men, of honest heart and level head, at the peril of their lives, bore witness that they saw with their eyes, heard with their ears, contemplated with their understanding, and handled with their hands, this Life, organized into human flesh and bones and blood?

Life in its essence can never be seen, known, or understood. After it has become organized in some living form its phenomena can be observed. The germ of life lies hidden in the seed, but its habits and its fruit are unfolded in the plant. John is writing of the Life, organized in him who was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. He speaks of *the* Life and not *a* life. It is definitely marked off as that Life which is Eternal, which was with the Father, and which has been manifested. In the Lord Jesus it becomes "*the Word of Life.*" A word is that which expresses the unseen thought, emotion, or volition of a person. There is power in the divine nature by which God is able to reveal himself outwardly in the forms of things. This he has done faintly in the material universe, but fully in "the Word made flesh," whose glory we may behold. Jesus is "the Word of Life," the full expression of the thought, heart, and will of

God. He is the expression of the Life in which the Father is revealed, the Life in which he delights, and the Life in which he could pledge the fulfillment of all his purposes of grace. This life remained unseen during all the ages of the past, until "the Word" became the expression of it, the means of unfolding it, and the channel for imparting it to man. As a man utters a check, expressing value and not creating it, so Jesus is the utterance of the name or value or character of God. He is the Logos, or continued discourse, unfolding God in a connected way and in logical order.

The use of the term "Word" does not necessarily imply the spoken word. Jesus Christ was the unspoken Word with the Father before the world was. He became flesh, and then he was the uttered Word of God. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"—hath uttered him, told him out, given him an exegesis. The literal rendering would be, "He hath led him out."

Christ perfectly represents that life which existed in God from all eternity. Therefore we are not dependent upon a book or upon a tradition for our revelation. The book reveals the person and work of our Lord, but our dependence is upon the Life manifested in that person, and the work accomplished by him. All the Gospels unfold this Life. The Gospel of John is concerning the "Word made flesh," while the Epistle of John is concerning the "Word of Life." The

Gospel tells us how this unuttered Word of God became flesh, and the Epistle tells us how, when this Word became flesh, it was the Word revealing the unseen Life that existed from eternity. The "Word," here, has the same meaning as it has in the beginning of the Gospel. In the Gospel of John "the Word was with God," but here, he is "*with the Father.*" In the former, God's relation to the world was in view, but here, his relation to the family of faith is presented, and hence he is with the Father. In both cases the expressions indicate a distinct personality. He is face to face with God—at home with the Father. In the Gospel, *God* is unfolded to the world; but in the Epistles, the *Father* is made known to his children. We are, therefore, treated as children throughout the whole Epistle. The Son of God from all eternity was the living expression of the nature and will of God, and in him was hidden all that God had to say to man. Christ is the Word revealing the overflowing nature of God, and he is the Life meeting the need of man. To receive him, therefore, is to have at once a complete revelation of the unseen God and a full possession of the divine life. To reject him is to be without a knowledge of God and to be destitute of eternal life—the life of the ages. This life is divine, and is therefore common to all the ages. It is the only life which runs through all the ages of the past, and which will permeate all the ages which may yet be unfolded.

John uses the word "we" with the same quiet modesty that leads him to speak of "that disciple whom

Jesus loved," without even indicating that he meant himself. Having told us what he saw and heard and handled, he proceeds to make known the purpose for which he is writing. First, it is that believers may have fellowship with those who heard and saw the Lord. In other words, he wants Christians to hear what he heard and to see what he saw, that they may know what he knows. "*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us.*"

Then follows a statement of the extent and wealth of this fellowship. It is "*with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*" The distinctness and equality of Father and Son, and also the identity of the eternal Son with the historic Jesus, are made known. With both we have a blessed fellowship. The Word revealing God is also the "Word of life" recreating man. The same Jesus who reveals the life and character of God, imparts spiritual life to us, so that those who receive him are brought into fellowship with the Father through the Son. It is not added, "and with the Holy Ghost," for it is by the Spirit that we are able to enter into this fellowship. We have now the "communion *of* the Holy Ghost," but John is not here considering communion *with* him. Our communion is with the Father and the Son, and the power which brings us into this great possession, in common with the whole family of faith, is the Holy Spirit. There may also be a sense in which the Christian has fellowship with the Holy Spirit, but that is another thing.

Life was in the Father ; it was revealed in Christ, and it is imparted to us. It is life from the Father, and it is pleasing to him whether seen in his Son or seen in us. In Christ God bridged the chasm separating between himself and man, and he imparts himself to us in a communion of divine life, and this life is our common possession with the Father and the Son. It is a life common to each person in the blessed partnership. Our fellowship is not merely with other members of the redeemed family, but also with the Father and the Son. All Christians belong to one family and equally share in the sonship of Christ.

Each believer possesses the Son, and through him life from the Father, and this gives to the whole body an intercommunion. The same life courses its way through every believing soul, making the whole body of Christians a human-divine unit. Thus this "Word of Life," which is Jesus Christ, the One who utters or leads out the life, restores us at once both to God and to one another. It imparts to us the life of God which we share with the Father and the Son, and therefore we are able to understand God and to worship him in spirit and in truth. It also brings us into union with men. They share with us the same knowledge, the same life, and the same Saviour, and therefore we are brought also to the love of men. In a word, we are restored to the worship of God and to the love of men.

The same thought, although presented from a different point of view, is given by Paul in his frequent mention of peace. The word *eirene*, translated peace,

is derived from a verb which means to unite or to bind together. "For he is our peace who hath made both *one* and hath broken down the middle wall of partition . . . that he might create in himself of twain *one new man*, so making peace; and might reconcile both in *one* body on the cross." Peace binds us together as one; hence we are to "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and this too, in one body, one Spirit, one hope, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all." Our God is the God of peace or of binding together. Jesus, in giving his peace to his disciples, gave them the very union which existed between himself and the Father, because he gave them his own life. This was the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. Hence the prayer "that they may all be one; even as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us," "and the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one as we are one." Paul directs us to the outward, and John to the inward ground of unity. Both are true.

There is, therefore, a profound truth in that much-abused phrase, "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men." It is, however, rather the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Christians. It is only when we are made partakers of the eternal life revealed in Christ that we are brought into fellowship with God as children and to the love of men as brothers. All other conceptions of fatherhood and brotherhood are without foundation in fact, are con-

trary to Scripture, and are utterly deceptive and misleading. There is a fatherhood and a brotherhood based upon life and birth, which differs from that which rests upon the primary creation, as much as the child which is folded to a mother's breast differs from the painting produced by her hand. The one is made and molded after the conceptions of her mind ; the other is the outcome of her inmost being. The one fatherhood is based upon the creating hand of God—a blessed foundation, indeed, had it never been marred and mangled by sin. The other has its source in birth, giving us a possession of the life of God which can never be touched by sin or Satan. Sin brought in death, alienation, and hatred ; but righteousness in Christ brought in life, union, and love.

Partnership with our Lord in the possession of his essential life is the under-current running through the whole of this Epistle. When we turn our eyes to Jesus and contemplate all of his purity, holiness, devoutness, patience, tenderness, grace, love, obedience, and entire freedom from self-seeking, we can say : that is the unhindered outcome and ripened fruit of our own inner life derived from him. It may be obscure in us now because of another and opposing life, but it is none the less ours ; and the time will surely come when it will be unfolded and manifested to us yonder with all its perfection and glory, precisely as it has already been seen in him here.

The second purpose of the writing is that his "*joy may be full.*" Some manuscripts say "your joy." In the

one case the apostle would be thinking of his own joy in making known Christ ; in the other, the joy of the believers in receiving what he makes known. In the first verse he is occupied with *what* he declares, but here he is thinking of *why* he declares it. What he makes known is the revelation of God in Christ which has become real to him. Jesus is the source, center, and object of the saint's joy. Through him we are brought into union and harmony with God and with all who are partakers of his life. John's heart was filled with joy while he contemplated these blessings coming to the hearts of those to whom he wrote.

Thus have the great thoughts of John struggled for expression in speaking of the life of God. This life is distinct from his personality. Jesus was the Word expressing that life, even before all creation. He made it known to man when he became flesh. This revelation on earth was attested to the senses of the apostles, and it became to them a blessed reality. It was the instrument and power appointed by God for reproducing the divine life in the apostle, and it is the same today for all who receive the One who made it. This fact is unfolded here in order that persons reading the Epistle may have fellowship with the Father and with the Son as well as with the whole family of faith, and also that the writer's joy may be filled to the full.

CHAPTER II

FELLOWSHIP IN LIGHT AND CLEANSING BY BLOOD

1 John 1 : 5–7

In the foregoing chapter we saw the relation of this Epistle to the Gospel of John, and also the skill with which our author develops that which had already been stated in the Gospel. We saw also the manifestation of the eternal life—the life of the ages, in Jesus Christ. This life was heard, seen, gazed upon, and handled. The life was in the Father, and it was manifested in the Son, who thus became the word and the life to us. A very natural question would be : If a life that has never been clearly seen before by human eyes is now revealed—if a character that has never before been known is now manifested, who is he? what is he like? is there any message from that manifested life? The answer is : "*God is light*, and darkness there is not in him, no, not any." This is the description of the being of God, and then follows the relation of the believer to God as thus made known.

"*This is the message.*" This word occurs in our Epistle in the eleventh verse of the third chapter : "This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." It is a revelation in a person and *not a discovery*. God gives tidings of himself, and only by this gift can man come to know him.

"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" This message had been announced, not so much from the lips of Christ as from what he was and did. It was not merely a word or a discourse, but the whole revelation made through him. Having been received from Christ, it is declared—announced—and repeated to us. In other words, John hands down the message which he received. It was no invention or discovery on the part of John or of the other apostles. He did not give to the church his latest thought or final conclusions, spun out of his own imagination or reasoning, but he simply echoed to the church what had been sounded in his own ears and what had been made real to his own soul. The Son, who was the apostle of the Father, announced the message received from the Father; and the apostles of the Son repeated to us the message received from the Son. Christ himself was the embodiment of the message both when coming from the Father to the apostles and also when coming from the apostles to us. "Hear ye him," said the Father; "Whom we preach," said Paul. This is the thought in Thessalonians: "From you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord"—or more exactly, from you hath echoed the word. The echo repeats the original sound. We echo what God reveals. We invent nothing. We follow the "scientific method." The scientist studies nature for his facts; we study the Christ of the Scriptures for ours.

Other writers tell us what God *does* and what attributes he possesses, but John goes to the root of things

and tells what God *is*. God is Spirit, God is Light, God is Love—not the Spirit, or the Light, or the Love, but Spirit, Light, and Love. These are his very essence. The simplest child can understand them and the profoundest philosopher cannot exhaust them.

In all the ancient world they had false notions of God. The world, through its wisdom knew not God. To the heathen he was a malevolent being—a God of power, vengeance, and hatred, to be dreaded and propitiated. To the Greek, God stood for the forces of nature, transformed into superhuman men and women. To the philosopher he was a mere abstraction. But John sweeps away all this error at a stroke by summing up what the Old Testament dimly approached, and what the Lord Jesus made visible. In the Old Testament the garment of God is light, his appearance is brightness, and his brightness is as the light. Isaiah had said, "The Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light," but this falls short of "God is light." There is not a spot of darkness in him—nothing hating or hateful, nothing crooked, unjust, or impure. There is not even one dark spot in his whole being. He has no malice toward the weakest creature he has formed, and no unrighteousness in the smallest act of his providence. This positive and negative way of stating a truth runs all through this Epistle.[1] It is not a repetition. He is essentially light, perfect and unmixed in his nature, and in our realization of that revelation there is no darkness. Darkness is excluded from the idea of God

[1] Ver. 6, 8; 2:4, 7; 5:20.

by his essential nature. "God is light, and in him there is no, not even one speck of, darkness."

Jesus is therefore spoken of as the One in whom was "life, and the life was the light of men."[1] He is the "real light which lightens every man coming into the world," or the "Light of the world."[2] And Christians, so far as they are able to reproduce the life of Christ, are themselves the light of the world. They do not *enlighten* the world. Jesus himself did not do that for men. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. But they throw a light *upon* the world. That is the work of the Master, and in us, as well as in him, the life is the light.

To the Ephesians this expression would mean much. Diana, their great object of worship, was the goddess of the moon. They were also devoted to Apollo, who was the god of the sun. They connected their idols with these beautiful objects. But they must have felt that there was a higher light proceeding from God than that which their eyes could see. The light seen by the eye could never enable them to choose the right path or to avoid the wrong, in the moral world. But he who could create these heavenly bodies must be light, and must be better and more divine than what their eyes saw. Yet they constantly confused the light from sun and moon, which they saw, with that which they saw not. They even exalted the lower light above the higher—the creation above the Creator—and that was their idolatry. They worshiped what they saw. And

[1] John 1 : 4. [2] John 8 : 12.

from this worship of the great luminaries of the heavens arose their worship of man ; for they felt that man was greater than these material things—then why should not divine honor be given to him ?

No figure could better represent absolute holiness than that of light. Physically light stands for splendor and glory, intellectually, for unmixed truth, and morally, for spotless holiness. It is a profound and at the same time a simple description of God. God "dwells in light unapproachable." In the natural world there are three forces, as there are three colors in light, but what light is no one has been able to discover. Whatever theory of light may be accepted, still back of all phenomena in its absolute essence there is a something past finding out. The trinity in unity has often been seen. Scientists say light has "actinic, luminiferous, and calorific power,"—it has life-giving, light-giving, and heat-imparting power,—force, light, and warmth, and these are one. All three are required in the various processes of nature. Every ray of light may also be divided into three colors—the blue, the yellow, and the red ; but here again the harmonious action of all three is necessary to bring to perfection any life in the material world. To separate, for example, the blue ray from the light shining upon a plant will mature the fruit, but there will be no seed in it—no power of reproduction. The blue is active or life-producing, the yellow luminous or light-giving, the red calorific or heat-creating. So we have life, light, and warmth in the natural world, and in the spiritual world, holiness,

truth, and love. And these correspond to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father originates, the Son accomplishes, and the Holy Spirit molds. Just as every ray of white light proceeding from the sun can be divided into its three elementary colors, so every revelation which God has made of himself has a three-foldness of Father, Son, and Spirit in one God. God did not create light for the world. He said "let light be" —let it be brought into contact with a darkened and confused earth lying in ruins. In like manner he who is light shines into our hearts, and then we too are in the light. To walk in the light is to be in fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit,—to share divine life, light, and warmth,—to be in accord with holiness, truth, and love.

Light in the limited sphere of our being is what God is in the heavenly world. He is unapproachable, infinite, and yet everywhere present. Light stands for ubiquity, brightness, purity, holiness, and truth. It is opposed to darkness as righteousness is to sin. It is the condition of life, growth, and beauty, as darkness is the condition of death, decay, and deformity. Nothing can reveal light but itself, and yet it reveals all things and is defiled by none. And such is God.

Accordingly John tells of the revelation of a higher light than that which feeds the life, guides the feet, and reveals beauty in material things. The Ephesians were right in dreaming of light, and Christ came to fulfill the dream. The sun and moon were God's creatures to bless his creation, but that light which creates and

fosters spiritual life, which guides the feet in moral ways, which reveals the beauty of the divine world, which brings men into fellowship with that world and with each other, is God ; and he has been revealed to men in his Son. This Son is the true light *illuminating* the whole race of man.

This is the message, God is Light. How simple. I was walking and all was well until the sun went down and darkness came. I lost my way, mistook pools of water for polished pavements and stumps for houses. But when the light dawned all was plain. Just so the Day-spring from on high hath visited us in Christ "to guide our feet in the way of peace." By its light we are wakened from the delusion of dreams to a world that is real, true, and enduring.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's light ;
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise
And all thy way be bright."

And what a view of God this is ! You may have the whole of the light of the shining sun and your neighbor will be none the poorer. He too can have the whole and you will be just as rich. You cannot possess the light as you do a bond, a book, a farm, or a house. You can only have the light of God in partnership with all others who receive its warming power, its illuminating joy, and its life-giving wealth.

Now, how can we, being sinful as we are and having sinned as we have, be maintained in fellowship with

God as *he is?* It is not merely how God's way can be harmonized with our way, but how *God himself* can be in harmony with the *nature of man*, that is under consideration here. This great question John proceeds to answer.

The antithetic structure of these verses would have a peculiar charm to Greek readers accustomed to this arrangement. It corresponds also to the style of the Psalms and much of the prophetic writings. The form in which this is cast will be best understood by writing out the opposing sentences separately as follows :

If we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness,
We lie
And do not the truth.

But if we walk in the light as he is in the light,
We have fellowship one with another
And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

If we say we have no sin,
We deceive ourselves,
And the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins,
And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned,
We make him a liar,
And his word is not in us.

Three distinct confessions may be made in connection with our relation to God, who is light, who exists in

light, and is revealed in light. "*If we say we have fellowship with him,*" is the confession with which we have to do just now. This means a conscious fellowship, but not necessarily a public confession to men. Indeed, it is rather the soul's confession to the Father than to the world. With his usual graciousness John does not say if ye, but "if we," putting himself with the humblest of believers.

Here we have an acknowledgment of union with the unseen God. All men have hungered after this very thing. Men instinctively desire communication with beings higher than themselves. This fact is one of the chief barriers against Christianity amongst the heathen. All uncivilized tribes have some means by which they suppose they have intercourse with unseen spirits. This, also, is the foundation of spiritualism in Christendom. Modern spiritualism is the most refined form of heathen superstition. These grotesque features of intruding into the realm of the unseen, both among the civilized and the uncivilized tribes, doubtless have some foundation in fact. It cannot be denied that there is a kingdom of darkness into which men may penetrate. But here God is revealed to us as light; and real fellowship is established between him and us. Into this unseen realm we may enter by faith. Its existence to us is a reality. This is something worthy of the dignity of man. It is not a communication from lying demons claiming to be disembodied spirits, but communion with the living God, based upon a message received from him.

"If we say we have fellowship with him *and walk in*

darkness." This walk includes the ordinary conduct of everyday life, the whole sphere of life, inward and outward, what we *are* and what we *do*. If we walk in moral darkness, in hatred and in hateful ways, in self-seeking, impurity, and injustice, we can no more have fellowship with God than we can live in a coal pit and participate in the light of the sun. The choice of darkness as our sphere of action is the rejection of God as our source of communion.

Sunlight can be shut out but not shut in. You can walk in the midst of it and yet be without it, but you cannot walk where it is not and yet be in it. We cannot walk in one way and point to another, saying, "That is my way." Any statement to this effect puts us in a position where "*we lie, and do not the truth.*" We are false in both word and deed. We speak what we know is false, and neglect to carry out in deed what we know is true. It does not mean that we mistake, but we knowingly speak falsely and knowingly act contrary to the truth. What we say is false ; what we do is not in harmony with the truth.

"*But if we walk in the light.*" We *walk* in the light, God *is* in the light—he is light. We move in time, he inhabiteth eternity. To have communion with light, we must partake of its nature. Light can only be linked with that which is of itself. This walk is not merely an imitation of God, but it is the essential element, the controlling principle, of our lives, breathing in harmony with the essence of God's nature. It is God and our inmost life that we have here. We are

in the presence of God without a veil. In this nearness we walk before the face of God, enlightened by the full revelation of what he is. In this most holy place, this secret of his presence, we have "*fellowship one with another.*" However selfish the world and the flesh may be, selfish aims can have no place in our hearts when we walk in the light. We can enjoy with another the light and all we see in it, and have no jealousy in the heart. In material things, however, we are for the most part deprived of what another possesses. In the light of God we have common possession of that which God gives us, and we rejoice to share it with another. It is only when we walk in the light that brother has the fullest fellowship with brother. Fellowship with God in heaven introduces us to fellowship in actual life on earth. Indeed, fellowship with the brethren will become a sign of fellowship with God. In Egypt "they saw not one another" during the three days of thick darkness. In the spiritual world it is only when the light comes that the brother is discovered, and fellowship begins. With John fellowship with believers is the visible effect and correlative of fellowship with God. When we are brought into union with God, through Christ, we become like the parts of a wheel, bound together by the circle of light.

Christ was the light himself and he has proclaimed light to Jew and Gentile by the resurrection from the dead.[1] We have been called out of darkness into this marvelous light.[2] Our eyes have been unveiled, that

[1] Acts 26 : 23. [2] 1 Peter 2 : 9.

we might see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.[1] The Father has made us fit to be partakers with the saints in light.[2] By believing we become sons of light,[3] and are light in the Lord.[4] And God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, is he who hath shined into our hearts, to give out the light of his glory. With all these mercies crowning our overflowing cup, it is not too much to say that we may *walk* in light, as God *is* light, and then find ourselves in sweetest fellowship with all the sons of light.

Now, this walk in light not only puts us in touch with the *saints without us*, but it also reveals the *sin within us*. It is not "sins" that come under review here, but the thing "sin"—not the act, but the nature—not what we do, but what we are—the spring and principle, and not the outward manifestation of its nature. The noun is singular and represents the unchanged and unchangeable "mind of the flesh," "law of sin," "sin in the flesh," which we carry with us to the grave. It cannot refer to any acts growing out of this nature, for those who "walk in the light as God is in the light" cannot be committing "sins," although they may have "sin." Acts of sin may not be done *by* them although the nature of sin may be *in* them.

The word "cleanse," when applied to the blood of Jesus, is used in the *sacrificial* sense of the Old Testament. Take Lev. 16 : 30 and 14 : 7 as examples. "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for

[1] 2 Cor. 4 : 4. [2] Col. 1 : 12. [3] John 12 : 36. [4] Eph. 5 : 8.

you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord." Here cleansing is expressly declared to be the result of an external work performed *for* the people by the priest, and *not in* the people by the blood. Again, "and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall *pronounce* him clean." Here again, it was the work done for the man and not in him that has produced his cleansing. The person under the efficacy of the blood shed had no defilement imputed to him, although he had it in him, but was authoritatively pronounced clean, and therefore was no longer subject to punishment. This is the sense in which cleansing is used by John. Ritual cleansing was the condition of participation in approach to God under the *Old Covenant*. Under the New Covenant the blood cleanses the *conscience* to serve the living God, and this is the sense in which it is used by John.

It is also true that because of the shed blood of Jesus, and because of our being counted precious according to its preciousness, the Holy Ghost comes to us now. By his agency we are freed from the dominion of sin, although not now from the presence of sin. On account of the blood of Christ, additional *power* will be brought into connection with us, at his second coming, that will free us from the presence of sin. But *until that time* the thing "sin" is in us, although it need not have dominion over us. The blood of Jesus, the Son of God, however, according to this Scripture, avails for us before God now, so that the defilement of the

indwelling sin is not imputed to us. It does not cleanse us by being applied in some mystical way to our inmost being. The blood was shed for us, and the preciousness of its poured-out life is imputed to us. And it is "*the blood of Jesus the Son of him.*" His incomparable dignity and spotless holiness gave value to the life poured out in sacrifice for us upon the cross. Because of its value we have present cleansing from the defilement of sin, the presence of the Holy Spirit delivering from its power, and in the resurrection we shall be free from its presence forever. But whether we have cleansing from, and power over sin now, or deliverance from its presence at the coming of the Lord, it is all through the blood, acting God-ward in our behalf.

To cleanse from sin, therefore, means to *free* from the *imputation of the defilement* that attaches to sin, in the sight of God.[1] Here it is the sin which we discover when we are walking in the light that is under consideration. It also frees us from the penal results of such defilement. We have the same thought in Rev. 7 : 13–15 : "These which are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they? These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* they are before the throne of God." This passage plainly directs us to the sacrificial power of the blood, showing that the preciousness of the life which

[1] It is a pity so many modern writers speak of cleansing as if it were a process of being sponged, entirely missing its scriptural conception.

was in his blood is imputed to us, and the defilement in us is not imputed—it is not reckoned to our account. When we are brought to Christ by faith, we are said to be sprinkled, cleansed, washed. Our persons, therefore, are regarded as preserved in cleanness, because of the continual efficacy of the blood once offered. As to our personal standing, the cleansing does not need repeating. Our "consciences once purged," testify no longer of sin imputed to us in its guilt and consequences, but they do testify of sin atoned, canceled, and put away forever. Now, this consciousness of being cleansed, abides with us even when we detect the thing "sin" within us while walking in the paths of light. Hence the blood cleanses, is cleansing, and of course we are being cleansed from all sin.

The one who walks in the light in greatest nearness, will have the keenest sense of his own frailty and the tenderest gratitude for the cleansing blood. He will repeat the experience of the high priest within the veil. While trembling before the light he will rejoice because of the blood in which he enters and because of which God rests upon the mercy-seat. The unscriptural statement of some teachers that the blood means the Holy Ghost, had its origin in Edward Irving, and is seldom heard in the present day. Others have said that it is the life or the soul of Jesus imparted to us. But there is no such teaching in the text. Others still advance some coarse thought about the blood of Christ entering into the heart to cleanse it within. But this is gross, material, and impossible. The truth and the Spirit

enter the soul, but not the material blood. The life of Christ most assuredly is imparted to us, but that is quite a different matter from what is under consideration here.

The Romanists teach that indwelling sin, if resisted, is not sin. But James says: "Every man when he is tempted is drawn aside of his own lusts and enticed." Surely that which tempts and draws aside cannot itself be sinless if it leads to sin. This twist in our nature, *whether indulged or resisted, is sin before God.* But we are reckoned absolutely clean on account of the blood, so that we can have fellowship with the unsullied holiness of God in light. The sin which remains in us *is not* imputed, but the spotlessness of the blood of Christ *is* imputed to us instead. In that sense we are being cleansed. The spotless *life* in us is fed by the truth, through the action of the Holy Spirit, and the blood, atoning for the *sin* within keeps us clean.

Having sin completely expiated, and being fully cleansed, it can truthfully be said, "already are ye clean because of the word spoken." That "word" has brought us to Christ, and we have a perfect cleansing through him. Our sin was imputed to Christ. The shedding of his blood put it away. The spotlessness of that life which was in his blood is imputed to us. It is thus, and thus only, that we are cleansed moment by moment when walking in the light. If the blood of beasts could make the Old Testament saints *ceremonially* clean, purifying the *flesh*, how much more shall the blood of Jesus cleanse the *conscience*. When we ap-

prehend the fullness of the work accomplished for us, however much the penetrating light of God may reveal the sin in us, we have none of its defilement on our conscience, before God—the conscience is cleansed, moment by moment, by the blood of Jesus, his Son. Blessed be his name! No Christian in this life is free from the presence of sin, that horrible thing which God hates. It is far better to own that we are conscious of this indwelling poison and have the assurance that truth has illuminated our minds than to deny it while we hear God say that "the truth is not in us." Indeed, I had far rather have the deepest sense of sin within, accompanied with the truth, than to have the highest sense of the most exalted character, while God declares that his truth finds no home in my heart. But side by side with this deep consciousness of the existence of the thing *sin* within us, we may cherish the abiding assurance that it is so completely cleansed by the precious blood that, in our communion with God, it is as though there was not a spot or stain in our whole being—"The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from *all sin*."

CHAPTER III

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

1 John 1 : 8–10

We have seen "The Life" revealed in Jesus who becomes himself the Life. All that was made known through him becomes the "word of life" to us. This life received brings "fellowship with God and with his Son Jesus Christ," and also fullness of joy to the sons of God. But the message out of that revelation shows that God is light and reveals the startling fact that we have sin. To meet this emergency we are assured that if we continue in fellowship with the light, *walking* in it as God *dwells* in it, then we find grace, cleansing utterly and absolutely from all sin, through the precious blood. To say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness is to lie with our lips, and to do what is not the truth with our deeds.

And now we come to those who may deny their need of the cleansing while walking in the light. "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.*" Having assumed that we have indwelling sin, the writer proceeds to discuss a negative statement concerning our condition. John seems fond of clinching things in this way. If we thus say, we deceive ourselves—we lead ourselves astray. The result of our being deceived is

due to our own efforts. We know we speak falsely, and yet endeavor to persuade ourselves that what we say is true. More than this, the truth is not in us. It is not inwardly efficacious and is not outwardly realized. It has not imparted the new life within, its light is not welcomed by the conscience, and its fruit is not seen in the walk. The truth of God is the very first spark of light to man. If it had a place within us, God's holiness and our sinfulness would be in such awful contrast that we could not be deceived about our condition, and therefore it would not be in our hearts to say we have no sin.

Still further, this principle of sin within may lead to acts of sin without. If so, then what shall we do? Are we utterly lost, or is there still hope? There is a remedy, fully meeting this need of the saint and perfectly satisfying the holiness of God: "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*" If we confess he forgives; not if we pray, for the writer has in mind something deeper than prayer. If we acknowledge our sins to God and do not attempt to conceal them from the brotherhood of men, he will forgive. It is confession of the lips growing out of contrition of the heart.[1] As in a court of justice a man confesses judgment when he admits all that is charged against him, so before the court of God he confesses his sins when he owns what the word lays at his door.[2] This confession extends to definite and specific acts, clearly defined in the indictment, and is not limited to

[1] John 1 : 20. [2] John 1 : 20; 9 : 22; 12 : 42; Rom. 10 : 9.

sin in general. It is not a wholesale confession, but it implies a bill of particulars both in the accusation and in the confession. And in every case a frank confession is met with a free forgiveness—forgiveness from the punishment and cleansing from the practice of sin. As to our persons, we are still clean. "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." We need our feet washed; that is, we need the removal of the defilement contracted from our every-day walk, that we may be "every whit" clean.

At the last supper the apostles had just bathed and were clean. As they passed from the place of bathing to the paschal feast dust had accumulated on their feet, and not until they washed were they clean again. When we believe in Christ we are washed, sanctified, and justified.[1] This does not need to be repeated. But we contract defilement by our daily walk. This must be removed, for God would have us every whit clean. Jesus is ever "girded with the towel" and present with the water to remove whatever soils the soul. This washing of the feet and cleansing of the walk is the result of confession. It need scarcely be added that there is not the most remote allusion to the modern "confessional" in this passage. The sin is *against God*, confession must be made *to* God, and then forgiveness will come *from* God through his son, Jesus Christ. Moreover, to confess is to say the same thing back to God, to echo from our hearts what he utters in his word. He declares that we have sinned—marks

[1] 1 Cor. 6 : 11.

out the sin—we just own the truthfulness of what he says. This is scriptural confession.

Our God is not fickle but faithful, not railing but righteous. His fidelity and righteousness are for us, and not against us. But he abominates a sham, and therefore requires an acknowledgment of the facts in the case. When this is made, he forgives. Before earthly courts confession secures conviction. The opposite is true before the court of God. We have a Surety who acts in our behalf. Christ bore our sins on the cross, and because of this the faithfulness and justice of God are pledged to our forgiveness when we make confession. He is faithful to his promise and just in the administration of his purposes of redemption in Christ. Because of these attributes he forgives in such a way as to cleanse us, not from *sin;* of that truth we have been instructed already. But he who is righteous will cleanse us from all unrighteousness—from everything crooked, wicked, and wrong.

Although "from all our unrighteousness," in the ninth verse, is singular, as well as free from "all sin" in the seventh, yet there is a difference to be observed. The man who *walks* in the light, just as God *dwells* in the light, cannot be committing any act of sin. Sin, as an inbred principle and not as an act, must therefore be under consideration when the blood "cleanseth." Moreover, John invariably uses the word "sin" in that sense.[1] But in the ninth verse it is a different word—a word which signifies one who is not what he ought to

[1] John 1 : 29; 1 John 3 : 4 (R. V.).

be, one who is a breaker of human or divine laws, one who is not innocent, or faultless, or guiltless. To be cleansed from all unrighteousness, then, includes the walk as well as the heart ; it includes the deeds which violate outward law and disregard recognized relationship as well as the condition of the heart from which such deeds spring. Hence it exactly agrees with the confession of sins, and not merely sin—that is, sinful acts, and a sinful nature as well. He that confesses sins has his sins forgiven and is cleansed from his sinful conduct. That is quite different from walking in the light, where sin is discovered and cleansed without confession. The very light which convicts of the wrong done, and the grace which leads to the confession, become lavers of cleansing to the walk and life.

This is the end which God seeks respecting us, both in the fact and in the form of the forgiveness which he deals out to us. To confess is a more real thing than to ask forgiveness. God does not need to be asked ; he never changes. But our sins need to be confessed and judged. They are constantly changing. We repent as sinners toward God, whose love has provided a Saviour, and we confess as believers toward God, whose righteousness has provided forgiveness. In the third chapter of Romans Paul declares that God maintains his justice unsullied even when justifying the believing sinner. Here John declares he is just in forgiving his confessing child. In both cases the justice is based upon the peerless work of Christ in life and death. Naturally we would say, he is loving and gracious to

forgive, but John bases forgiveness upon his righteousness. Righteousness is the recognition of what is due from one to another. It is due from God to the confessing child, who is made partaker of his life and light, to have forgiveness granted on condition of his confession. It is due, not in his own right, but by virtue of his relation to God in Christ. "Against thee and thee only have I sinned, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and be clear when thou judgest." The old Scottish saint was therefore right in saying, "My only hope is the righteousness of God."

The one who confesses sin, while in the act of judging his ways, will have the truth and nature of God revealed to him afresh. Truth in action is righteousness, just as falsehood in action is sin. God's righteousness is his love in action disciplining his children. Accordingly we have here, first, the forgiveness of the specific sins confessed, and then the character of the one who makes the confession purified. A continued and unbroken communion with God leads to righteousness in life. Unconfessed sin destroys communion with God, results in weakness, and leads to transgression. Confession of sin restores communion, secures nearness and strength, and spiritual strength produces righteousness. It is the blood that "cleanses from all sin"; but it is God himself who cleanses from all unrighteous ways. Let it always and everywhere be owned and confessed that he acts by and through the virtue of the blood. He is just and gracious, he is light and love, in dealing with us because of this blood. But it is the action of

his truth, of his Spirit, of his providence, as well as the confession of our hearts and lips, that lead to the cleansing from all unrighteousness in heart and life.

"*If we say that we have not sinned.*" This is the third time John uses "if we say." Here he is not speaking of sin in the heart, but of the actual commission of sins in the life—not of a principle but of a result. If we say we have fellowship with light and walk in darkness, we lie; if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; but if we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar. This we do, both because God says we have sinned, and because he has sent his Son into the world on the assumption that the whole world has sinned, and therefore *we* have sinned. Nay more, he has provided the mediation and advocacy of Christ to meet this need of his saints after they have been forgiven as sinners. God will thus be made a liar, because of his testimony in his word, and also because of his whole dealing with the race of man, whether as rebellious sinners or as stumbling children. Such a declaration not merely asserts that God has lied, but that he *is* a liar. This denial does not merely charge God with telling lies—it goes deeper, and charges falsehood against his nature.

To deny that we have sinned is to destroy fellowship. Those who deny sin in themselves, and sins committed by them, can have no communion with God about sin and blood. But when we own sin within us, and confess the known sins committed by us, we are like-minded with God in his hatred of sin and

in the provisions of grace made to meet it. This is restoration and communion to the believer, for it is the sin and the sins of Christians that are under consideration here. It is sins brought down to the present moment that the words used here imply.

This denial of having sinned shows that his word, the living and the written word, has no place within us. The word of God spoken to the soul becomes a living person within, as well as an authoritative power from without. We may abide in his word, or his word may abide in us—we may abide in the truth, or the truth may abide in us. It is the word of the gospel that is especially meant, for he is here dealing with the sins of Christians. The whole word of the gospel is for those who are lost and undone because of sin. He neither could nor would receive this word unless he was convicted of sin. To deny having sinned, even since he entered the brotherhood of light, gives proof that this word of God has no lodging place within him.

Thus we see how two opposing lives and natures are brought into harmony and fellowship. God in eternal life is revealed in his Son. His nature is absolute holiness. Man has the principle of sin in him and the guilt of sin already committed by him. For the sin in him he has the blood of Christ with which he is sprinkled for a perpetual cleansing, and for the sin committed by him he has forgiveness conditional upon confession. Notwithstanding the vast difference in their essential natures, God as he is and man as he is, have fellowship in light by virtue of the cleansing blood. And, when

walking in the light, this is true without penitence, prayer, or confession. It is not meant by this statement that the heart of the Christian does not confess or say back to God the same things that he says, both about the sin within and also about the cleansing power of the blood which grace has provided. But the cleansing "from all sin" is conditioned upon the feet walking the paths of light, and not upon the lips making confession of the sin that exists within.

When, however, *sins* have been committed, then God demands an honest confession before his faithfulness and righteousness can forgive. As soon as the confession is made God is faithful and just to forgive. It is a frank confession which secures a free forgiveness. God, as he acts, and man, as he fails, still remain in full fellowship, when the failing man sees and confesses his sins as they are seen and witnessed against by God—when he says the same thing back to God that God has said to him about his sins.

Our remorse, or the terrors of conscience, do not measure the depth of our guilt; nor do these restore us to God. The death of Christ measured and met the whole of our need. The person and the blood of Christ settled, for time and for eternity, the question of our sin. Although our standing before God has been made secure, yet our communion with him can only be maintained when we share his thoughts respecting our walk and way, and own all, acknowledge all, and judge all according to the light of his truth.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADVOCATE AT COURT

1 John 2 : 1, 2

We have seen that the eternal life revealed in Jesus Christ is the "Word of Life." The sum of what was revealed was this: God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. This revelation of the eternal life is a revelation of the invisible God. As man was originally in the image of God, there is also a revelation of what the true man ought to be, as well as of what the true God is. The life of Christ, therefore, revealed what we ought to be and do as well as what God is. The sum and substance of the whole life of Christ was obedience and love. Now, if we are brought into fellowship with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ, these same two features ought to characterize us—absolute obedience to the will of God, and the constant outgoing of love toward the need of man.

The obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ was both inward and outward. There was no sin in him, there was not even a tendency to sin. He was inwardly absolutely holy. He also resisted all temptations from without, coming to him through the devil. His whole life was one continued act of obedience to the will of his Father. We, however, are inwardly sinful and our inmost nature is opposed to God. This condition of our

inmost being is called sin ; and to meet the need of this sin we have the blood of Christ. Outwardly also we may commit sins even after we have eternal life, and in order to be free from righteous judgment we must make our confession to God, who is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. The blood cleanses from *sin*, apart from confession, repentance, or prayer ; but once *sins* are committed, an honest confession is an absolute necessity to forgiveness, confidence, and communion.

If we deny that we have sin in us we deceive ourselves, and "there is no truth in us." If we deny that we have sinned, we make God false and make manifest the fact that his word is not in us. In the one case we play false with ourselves, and prove that there is no truth in us. In the other case we play false with God, and prove that his word is not in us. The truth within would reveal the sin within ; the word coming from without would convince of sins committed. But the blood of Christ cleanses so completely from *sin*, and *sins* are so completely put away through confession, that the believer stands as if he had never known the one nor committed the other.

These things are written to keep us from committing any act of sin. "*These things I write unto you that ye sin not.*" One of the objects of the revelation of God is to free his people from the slavery of sin. If that revelation does not succeed in making them holy in themselves, it must yet be seen that God hates sin and loves righteousness. We are God's house, and "holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, forever." The fact

that each sin must be confessed condemns the sin. When God forgives and cleanses he does not excuse or palliate. The freedom of forgiveness, on the ground of redemption, gives no license to sin. God maintains his holiness while dealing with man because he acts through his Son. And this action of God through another is the subject of our present consideration.

There are three words used in the New Testament expressing Christ's relationship to man as the *channel* for blessing from God. These three words are Mediator, Intercessor, and Advocate. All of the functions of Christ, in this three-fold aspect, are included in his priesthood. One can act, however, as mediator, coming between two parties; or as intercessor, pleading with one in behalf of another; or as an advocate, conferring intimately with his client, and defending him at court, without any thought of priesthood or sacrifice. Atonement is not necessarily connected with these three offices, as such. In the case of Christ, however, we know that these offices are based upon sacrifice. He is "the Mediator of a better covenant." "The first, was not dedicated without blood" of beasts, but Christ has established the "better covenant," "by the sacrifice of himself." As Intercessor he acts by virtue of his death, resurrection, and unchanging priesthood, as seen in Romans and Hebrews. When we come to his office as Advocate it is plainly found to rest upon the fact that "He is the propitiation for our sins."

On the other hand, the fundamental thought of priesthood is sacrifice and appeasement for some wrong

committed. A priest is first of all a slayer. In the Scriptures, priesthood has a three-fold aspect—priesthood of atonement, priesthood of presentation, and priesthood of blessing. In the case of Melchizedek we see the final flower of priesthood illustrated, as he comes from the city of peace bearing bread and wine in his hands and blessing on his lips, for the "friend of God," on his way from the slaughter of the kings to the temptations pressed upon him by the king of the city of sin. But we know that no blessing can come from God until all sin is put away and the sinner is presented faultless before his face. Like every other truth revealed in the book of Genesis, this too is wrapped up as within a seed, ready to germinate when a suitable soil is found. This soil is prepared in the book of Leviticus. There we see, first, atonement by blood without the gate; then presentation within the veil, where every name of every tribe is sustained upon the shoulders and the breast of the priest; and last of all the high priest comes out in company with Moses and blesses the people. Our priest suffered without the gate and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He now appears before the face of God for us. Because we are presented faultless before God, blessings come to us now from God by the unseen ministry of the Holy Spirit. By and by "he shall appear the second time" as Priest and King for the consummation of every blessing to his church, to the Jewish people, to the nations, and to the world. He will come in the character of both Priest and King—king of peace and king of righteousness as well as

"Priest of the most high God." When he comes again it will be in manifested glory; but in the meantime he has passed through the heavens into "the temple not made with hands," where he ministers, unseen, in our behalf. All of this we accept by faith, as we do every other blessing coming to our hearts through "the apostle and high priest of our confession."

Christ is the Mediator. "There is but one mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus." This is the relation that Jesus Christ sustains between God and the world. All the blessings that come to the world, *to man as man*, are through Jesus Christ, as the one Mediator. The fruitful seasons, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, are the "riches of his goodness" through the mediation of Christ. So also is the gift of the word of God, the existence of the church, and the preaching of the gospel to the world. The continuation of natural mercies to the world, and also, of the gracious offers of the gospel to a rebel race, are all perpetuated through the mediation of the man, Christ Jesus. Hence he is the Mediator of the new covenant.

He is also the one through whom the benefits of this covenant come to unregenerate men. God has promised to make a covenant with the sons of Israel, not like the one which he made when he brought them up out of the land of Egypt. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law into their mind . . . and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no

more." When Israel is finally established in blessing, God will execute this covenant in sovereign mercy, "and so *all* Israel shall be saved." But in the meantime, while that day is waiting for its fulfillment, all who believe among every nation, anticipate the future benediction of Israel and receive the benefits of this covenant. Every eternal provision of this covenant is ministered now to us who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, just as it shall be ministered to the Jewish nation through the one Mediator in that coming day. The special features of this covenant, "I will be their God and they shall be my people," will be realized in the future history of the Jewish nation. But repentance, which includes a renewal of the heart by regeneration, and remission of sins, which implies that they will be remembered no more, together with the covenant union between God and the believer, are now preached among all nations in that blessed name. This proclamation of the gospel of peace, to all men, is both the goodness and the grace of God, acting through the Mediator of the new covenant, as unfolded now, and as promised by and by. Now it is given to *some* of every nation who believe; by and by, to *all* of the Chosen Nation "that the *residue* of men may seek after the Lord." [1]

Christ is also the Intercessor. He is not called by this name, but he makes intercession. The Greek word translated *intercede* means to fall in with, to hit upon, to meet for purposes of conversation, to hit the

[1] Acts 15 : 16–18.

mark, or to hit in the center. It is the opposite of the word translated *to sin*, which means to miss the mark, or not to reach the desired end. The word is used several times in the New Testament. It is found in the eighth chapter of Romans and in the seventh of Hebrews. In Romans it is stated : (1) That Christ died for us and, therefore, will not condemn us ; (2) he was raised from the dead as the one whom God justified and who acted for us ; (3) he is at the right hand of God, having gone there on purpose to make intercession for us. Now, he who has done all this for us, is not the one to condemn us. In Hebrews we have a statement descriptive of his character. He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," and one who abides forever, having an unchanging priesthood. His priesthood does not pass from one person to another, "wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost (clear through to the end) them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." That is to say, however much they may miss the mark and fail down here on earth, he is hitting the mark and attaining for them up yonder in heaven. Whatever may be their failures here, he never fails in acting for them there. If we are already saved, we may not need a mediator, for we are brought face to face with God ; but we do need an intercessor who will have due regard to the claims of holiness while making provision for our shortcomings.

We now come to consider Christ as our Advocate.

The same word is used to designate the Holy Spirit, and is translated Comforter. God has another advocate now on earth, and he is the Holy Spirit. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

The words intercessor and advocate differ thus: The former is sent to meet and confer in behalf of his client, while the latter is called near, to act in the interests of the one whom he represents. The Holy Spirit was officially promised and appointed to act on earth for God. Jesus, the Christ, is officially provided and appointed to act for the believer in heaven. The Holy Spirit acts with the individuals of the church for God, while Christ acts also for the individuals of the church with God. The Advocate represents the personal aspect of Christ both with the Father in heaven and also with his children on earth.

And this leads to a distinction in the use of the three words, mediator, intercessor, and advocate. The first has exclusive reference to God's relation to the whole world, apart from the thoughts of fatherhood and sonship. If there were not a single child of God on earth, blessings would still come to the world through the one mediator. But the intercession of Christ, both in Romans and Hebrews, is associated with the whole body of believers. In Romans, the Apostle Paul is speaking of all who are in Christ Jesus, without condemnation, groaning to be delivered, and waiting to be conformed to the perfect image of the Son of God. In Hebrews, it is "a house," a family—

brought out from bondage and on the way to a rest, expecting to reach a holy temple and to reign in righteousness. The relation of Christ to this elect family is that of Intercessor, to meet the evil consequences of the flaws, failures, and mistakes of the journey.

But when we come to this passage, and to the use of the word advocate, it is plain that John is not considering the world at large, but those who have "the life."[1] It is not even the whole body of those living ones, but each individual, in his personal relation with a holy God and a loving Father. It is each one for himself, saying, walking, confessing. Each one for himself has fellowship, walks in the light, is cleansed from the defilement of the sin which the light reveals, confesses the sins which the word makes known, and is forgiven and cleansed from acts of unrighteousness. These people are exhorted to "sin not; and if any man sin. . ." This reveals the sphere of the Advocate. It is the *individual* soul in his personal relation with God, having his standing kept secure by an Advocate at court, even if he shall commit an act of sin, in spite of the entreaty given from God, and notwithstanding the effort made by himself. The Mediator acts for the world, the Intercessor for the church, and the Advocate for the individual. Here the Advocate is acting for the

[1] After a man's case has been tried before judge and jury and he has been condemned, and after the Supreme Court has refused to reverse the judgment and the executive to interfere, he has no use for an advocate. This is the condition of the world now—"condemned already because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

little child, possessing the sinless life obtained by spiritual birth—a life struggling up toward a perfect development, but struggling all the time against the inherent force of the old and sinful life that has long had command of the entire nature and powers.

God continues to bestow "the riches of his goodness" upon the world through the Mediator, "the riches of his grace" upon the church through the Intercessor, and the fullness of his fatherly affection upon each individual child in the whole household of faith through the Advocate. The nearer to God we come, the richer the discovery we make. It is riches of goodness, riches of grace, and riches of affection, here and now, but what remains to be discovered in the "riches of glory" by and by, are among the things which may not now be known.

"Things that are not now
Nor could be
Then shall be our own."

Thus the Advocate goes a step farther than the Intercessor. We have sinned and we are conscious of our sin. We may be overwhelmed with it, as Peter was when he went out and wept. The Advocate is the one called to our side at such a time. We need one who will come to us, or to whose side we may go. We need one who, when he sees our sorrow, will come and sympathize with us, take up our case, comfort us, restore us, and assure us of our perfect standing with God in spite of our failure before man. Our communion is

broken, our heart is overwhelmed, but our standing remains unchanged. He is our Advocate now, before God for this purpose, as he was once our Substitute on the cross for another. He deals with us personally. His prayer *for* Peter, and his secret interview *with* Peter, "for he appeared to Cephas," stand for the Advocate. What he said to God, the loving Father, for Peter, and what he said to Peter, the weeping sinner, for God, we do not know. But we do know the blessed fact of the meeting on earth and the prayer in heaven, resulting in the blessed fruit of restored fellowship, confidence, and honorable service. And what sinning child has not experienced the same? "But I have prayed for thee," that is the one side. "Go and tell Peter," and that is the other. The perfect Advocate kept both the standing before God unquestioned, and the service before man undisturbed.

"*If any man sin*," means any believing man; for the whole of the Epistle is written to those who have already believed and have life. If we as believers have committed sins, "*we have an Advocate with the Father*." We have the Advocate we need, in the midst of our failure, and he is the Advocate provided, in the riches of God's grace. It is when communion is interrupted that Christ appears for us. God acts in grace, in virtue of our Advocate—in virtue of the righteousness and of the blood before him. He acts to bring us back to communion by means of repentance. Thus Christ prayed for Peter before he committed the sin, and at the given moment he looked upon him, and

Peter went out and wept bitterly. Christ did not pray because Peter repented, but Peter repented because Christ prayed.

When Christ was upon earth his eye was upon the Father, although he himself was in the midst of us. He was always intent upon doing the will of the Father. Now that he is in heaven his eye is upon us down here, although he is before the Father's face. He is constantly watching over his sheep and meeting their need. He never forgets them.

Notice, John does not say if any man repent, or weep, or give up his sins, he has an Advocate; but "if any man *sin*, we have an advocate with the Father." It does not mean that if any man is in a sinful state he has an Advocate with the Father. A Christian is not in a sinful *state*. He is delivered from that condition by faith in Christ, and by the blood of the cross. But the Christian may be guilty of a sinful *act*, or of a number of sinful acts, after he is thus delivered; nevertheless he still has this Advocate.

The Advocate is "with the *Father*." God is still our Father, and we are still his children, in spite of the acts of sin which we may commit. An act of sin does not break the relationship between us. In time the practice of sin must destroy the conscious communion of the believer. There can be no unhindered communion when there is unconfessed sin. If a child sins against a parent, never, until that sin is confessed, can there be a frank, free, open communication between the parent and the child. But the parent's love is un-

changed amid all the ingratitude and rebellion of the child. And so the love of God is unchanged toward us in the midst of all our failures.

The Advocate that we have with the Father is "*Jesus Christ the righteous One.*" God saw no iniquity in Jacob because of the blood on the mercy-seat.[1] He sees no sin in us because of the Advocate, who has entered into heaven by his own blood. Our standing and our communion are both maintained in him before the Father. Having once undertaken our cause, he never relinquishes the trust. Once taken up, never given up. From the beginning to the end of our course he maintains our standing. There is no limit to his power, as there is none to his love.

> "All things on earth shall pass away,
> But the love of God abides for aye."

Now this advocacy of Christ, like his mediation and intercession, is based upon the atonement made upon the cross. The priest under the Old Testament dispensation entered into the holy place after the offering had been made, but not before. Christ, in interceding for us, bases his plea entirely and always upon what he has accomplished upon the cross. He never entered upon the work of the priesthood until he had "made one sacrifice for sins forever." His person and his work are the grounds of his advocacy. He is the righteous one. This was symbolized by the incense and blood borne by the high priest as he entered into the most

[1] Num. 23 : 21.

holy place on the day of atonement. They represented the person and the work of Christ. As these are infinitely precious to God, and as we are identified with them, our case can never be lost before the court of heaven. "He is the propitiation," and because he is the propitiation he can act as the Advocate with assurance of success.

Christ died for the sin of the whole world as Mediator, and all the world may have the benefit of his death. But he is the Advocate for believers only. He is both an offering and an offerer. He first made the offering of himself, "even as Christ gave himself for us." And now in heaven, basing his plea upon the merits of that offering, he acts as Advocate for his brethren.

It is scriptural to say that Jesus *seeks* the world; but he *keeps* the saints. It is not scriptural to say that he prays *for* the world. He is praying *to* the world that men may receive the Father's love, but not *for* the world that the Father may give his love. He is praying to the Father that the saints may be kept in his love and forgiven for their ingratitude and their sins. God loves the world, not because Jesus died; the death of Christ is the outgrowth of God's love. Christ is the gift, and not the price, of the Father's love.

There is only one place where it might seem that Jesus makes a plea for the world, and that was at his crucifixion. But in addition to the fact that the Jews were professedly of the family of faith, it is evident that Jesus entered into the spirit of the hour through which he was passing at that time. "*He is the propitiation*

for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." This was the world-wide work he was to bring to perfection on the cross. Being in sympathy with the infinite purpose of that hour, he begged forgiveness for those who were nailing him to the tree.

But the whole attitude of God toward the world is one of benevolence, love, and a loving endeavor to save and bless. Jesus himself was the revelation of the Father's heart when he declared that the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. In the whole of the Scriptures the unsaved world is never once entreated to seek after God ; but, on the contrary, God is represented as seeking the world. When in the world there was "none that seeketh after God," then God in mercy came to seek for man. The exhortation in the prophet to "seek the Lord while he may be found," and similar sayings in the Old Testament, are all addressed to Israel, a nation which stood in covenant relation to God. Such exhortations never came to the Gentile nations. Paul says, "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us : we pray in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Christ came out visibly to beseech men to accept the reconciliation and to submit to God. Since he left the world, the church keeps up the entreaty. It is God's supplication to the world through us. When he is thus beseeching men to accept the settlement of the question of sin, as made on the cross, there is no need of any one interceding with him. He prays to men, and is not prayed to for men.

"Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye

shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,'' and similar passages in the New Testament, are encouragements and promises made to the "disciples" of our Lord.[1] When once we enter the school of Christ, and by the entrance become "members of the household of God," then, such are our privileges, that whatsoever we ask in the Name is given unto us. It is not here taught that unregenerate men may not pray. Far be that from our thoughts. What is here maintained is that God's habitual attitude toward a lost world is one of benevolence, beneficence, and prayerful longing for its return to the bosom of his love. He does not wait to be wakened out of the sleep of indifference by the cry of his creatures. His love is so intense that any one becoming possessed of its current is swept along with such force that he is exposed to the charge of insanity.[2] He is like the searching woman toward the silver, the seeking shepherd toward the lost sheep, and the loving father waiting to greet the returning sinner. When the seats remain empty at the banquet, he sends out his servants quickly to "compel" men to come in. He is the loving, giving, self-sacrificing God, beseeching a besotted world to arouse from its slumber of death.

The whole of Roman Catholic, and also much of Protestant, teaching concerning the mediatorial work of Christ for the living and for the dead, is unscriptural. When they add the intercession of glorified saints, and especially that of the Virgin Mary, it becomes a gross

[1] Matt. 5 : 1. [2] 2 Cor. 5 : 13–15.

misrepresentation of the truth, and a caricature of God himself. It would seem to teach that the eternal God is an austere, severe, unloving, and unforgiving God. But an appeal can be made to the tenderness of a mother's heart in the blessed Virgin. She can reach the heart of her Son, and the Son can approach the Father, and thus the unfeeling hardness of his heart can be overcome. It is not necessary to speak here of the impossibility of a mere human being, even although it be the mother of our Lord, being in every place, or in any place, for that matter, to hear our prayers. It is the horrible misrepresentation of the character of God against which this protest is made. God is not a monster to be overcome in his malignant purpose by the circuitous route of one intercessor or many intercessors. He is a God of love, himself beseeching men to accept his Son, so that his benevolent purpose of grace may be accomplished in their salvation and glorification.

It will thus be seen that for sin within us we have the blood, cleansing moment by moment; for restoration to communion, confession *to* God and forgiveness *from* him; and for keeping our standing unquestioned in heaven, the righteous person of our Lord. For the sin in the inmost being of our hearts we have the sanctifying blood, and for the maintenance of our place in the "holy of holies" before the face of God, we have the righteous Advocate. These things, according to the riches of grace, remain untouched by any act of ours. Everything, from the court of God to the heart of man, is established in righteousness forever. But

for *communion*, for a sharing of the thoughts, feelings, and counsels of God, we must judge sin as he judges it, and unhesitatingly say the same thing about it that he says. In other words, we must *confess* our sins, must speak back to God his own words concerning their heinousness. And all this cleansing on earth, standing in heaven, and communion of soul between heaven and earth, is based upon Christ's propitiation on the cross for the world.

The cross and mediatorship are for the world. Mediatorship opens the way for mercy to the whole race, intercession secures the salvation of all who have accepted the mercy, and advocacy makes certain to them their individual standing. The Cross is for the world. The Mediator is for the world. The Intercessor is for the church. The Advocate is for me—"if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father."

"Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right man on our side,
The man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who this may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he,
Lord Sabaoth his name,
From age to age the same,
And he must win the battle."

—*Luther.*

CHAPTER V

SAYING AND DOING, OR PROFESSION AND CONDUCT

1 John 2 : 3–11

THE divisions of both chapter and paragraph are unfortunate here. The first chapter ought to end with the second verse of the second chapter. Then there ought to be no break in the paragraph from that point until the end of the eleventh verse.

The whole of this division is about the responsibility growing out of privilege. Is this book built upon the mold of the tabernacle? If it is, then we have been inside the veil, where God is revealed as light, and where the provisions of his grace, through the blood of Christ on the mercy-seat, have been made known. We have learned what God is to us, "grace, mercy, and peace from God," as if we stood in the Most Holy Place. We shall now withdraw and go outside of the veil, to consider those truths made known by the types of the Holy Place.

John has in mind what Christ was and is to God in our behalf. He was perfect in character, as symbolized in the bread, covered with incense; and perfect in light, as indicated by the lamp-stand filling the court with a sevenfold light. This inward perfection, having a perfect manifestation, is the manifested God—"the life

was the light of men.'' But we are supposed to know him who has thus been revealed, and to be partakers of the life of the One who has revealed him. He now proceeds to consider how we may perceive that we know him, and also how this assurance leads to a confession and to a character corresponding to our position. That character, as we shall see, involves our repeating the very life and light of Christ, as set forth in the symbolism of the Holy Place of the tabernacle.

Our first business as Christians is to enter into the enjoyment of God himself as made known in the Son, and not to worry about whether we are making suitable returns for the saving grace ministered to us. This is fellowship. Our next business is to know what he is from the light that shines in him. Because of the cleansing blood we may know this calmly, thankfully, and joyfully. Then comes our obligation to measure ourselves by what he is, and to be imitators of his ways. This is our walk.

We come then to the confession of fellowship and knowledge, and to the responsibilities that grow out of it. This confession is made in three forms : confession of knowledge, confession of abiding in him, and confession of fellowship in light. As ''know'' is used in its highest sense, to be one with, it is a confession of union with God, with his life and with his light—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, implied but not named. The *walk* that should grow out of this confession is here unfolded. As duty is the reverse side of doctrine, so conduct is the reverse side of confession.

First, there is the assertion of knowledge. "*In this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*" In this thing we come to understand that we have come to understand *him*. The sign of knowledge is obedience, and when we see the sign we may draw our conclusions respecting the fact. If the relation is real the obedience will be certain. We have come to know that our experience has been a true one; and our thought that we knew God has been confirmed in habitually keeping his commandments. It is the knowledge coming from experience and not from intuition. This knowledge is often spoken of in John's Gospel in the same sense in which we use the word in ordinary conversation. We are often asked, "Do you know that man?" and what is implied is "Do you think rightly about him?" "Do you think of him exactly as he deserves, or better or worse than he deserves?" For many obvious reasons it is difficult to have an accurate knowledge of men, but it is not so of God. We may know God better than any of our fellow-men. Men may play a part, may change, may not be in a position to show their real character; but God, never.

Much difference of opinion prevails as to whether it is the Father or the Son who is meant here. The difficulty vanishes when we remember that John has always in mind the unseen essence of the divine Being revealed to his understanding. The Revealer and the Revealed are one, in the mind of the writer. But whether John has under consideration one or another aspect of "that

which was from the beginning" is learned from the context rather than from the usage of his language. Here he evidently refers to the Father as revealed to us through the Son—to the One to whom we turn as to God.

To have a knowledge of a person involves sympathy. There can be no accurate knowledge without it, for there must be a kindly response in the one to what is discovered in the other. To know God we must be in vital fellowship with him, and we must have a disposition to be conformed to his nature. To be known of God, to be the object of his knowledge, also implies a harmony established between him and us. From John's point of view this comes through the life received from God, while Paul emphasizes the life poured out in the blood of Christ, that we might receive life within.

A child comes to know its father by the rules which he lays down to guide its conduct. They are often against the natural inclination of the child. But the child has confidence that the rules are just. The rules are obeyed, and by degrees it is learned that the father is wise in drawing such lines. In after years the child can look back and understand the principles that guided the father's conduct, and then knows what kind of a man he was. Just so, and much more perfectly, may we know God. There is uncertainty, caprice, and the mixture of right and wrong in man, and so we are often bewildered by his inconsistencies in our efforts to understand him. But God is always the same, and we come to know him if we keep his commandments.

This is more than merely obeying them. It is a careful observation of them. It implies both remembering and fulfilling a request as well as merely obeying a command. It is a service of the spirit and not of the letter, an observance of commands and not obedience to laws. John never uses the term law in speaking of our relation to God the Father. That belongs to citizens but not to children. If God's commandments are kept, thought about, and cherished, as the commandments of a father, then we shall gain a knowledge of him that can be obtained in no other way.

The Jews, even in the relation of servants, would learn much about God by observing the Ten Commandments. "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Here he learns that God is a deliverer of slaves from a merciless tyrant and that he wishes to be remembered and worshiped as such a God. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" would teach the Jew that God was his Creator and that he could not create his God. By "the image of anything in heaven or on earth," he would learn that God is more glorious than any material thing. He is jealous that the hearts of his people should be given to nothing lower than himself. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," would show the Israelite that he was in the presence of a deliverer greater than anything he could see, that this deliverer was a living person, and that, as he had taken that name upon him, he ought not to utter it in a profane or care-

less manner, nor behave in a way unworthy of this honor. The remembrance of the Sabbath day would teach him both to work and to rest, because God worked and rested, for the commandment is nothing apart from the reason for its observance. "Honour thy father and thy mother," would teach him to regard them in that relation, and to have a consciousness of the bond that unites parent and child. Not to kill, would teach him that God is the author of life, that life is a sacred thing, and is as sacred in another as it is in one's self and therefore must not be destroyed. Not to commit adultery, would teach him not merely to abstain from pollution for fear of exposure or disgrace—that would not be keeping the commandment. How can I sin against God? would be the thought. Hence he would learn that God is the author of wedlock and of its purity and that he will protect the sacredness of that union. Not to steal, would teach him that God maintains the rights of one as well as of another. This law should be observed because it *is* God's law, and he could be trusted to sustain men's rights upon the earth. Not to bear false witness, would teach the Jew that God is a God of truth, and a hater of every false way and word. He is pledged to lay bare and to destroy lies. From the command that nothing should be coveted, he would learn that God is an unselfish and non-coveting being, and he therefore does not wish us to covet that which is not our own.

Thus, step by step, would the Jew learn the character of God by observing his commandments. And thus

do we also learn. Their knowledge grew out of God's dealings with a nation, but ours out of his dealings with the individual. Obedience, therefore, leads to spiritual knowledge. "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine." "We do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." We only know him in that way. That is the only way in which a knowledge of God can be obtained. As the ear is the organ of sound, the eye of color, and the palate of flavor, so a submissive heart and an obedient walk are the channels to a knowledge of God.

Now, with this knowledge comes its confession. "*He that saith I know him.*" We have this word "saith" used three times in these verses. "He that saith I know him," "He that saith he abideth in him," "He that saith he is in the light." We have thus a confession and a sign of knowledge, a confession and a sign of position, a confession and a sign of fellowship in light, in this part of the Epistle.

Confession is everywhere enjoined in the word of God. It follows relationship with God, as naturally as the parched lip follows thirst, as a plant grows out of the germinating seed, as the brightness of buds and leaves follow a shower. The rose that says, "I have just been washed in the shower" ought to look bright and fresh. So the man who says, "I know him" ought to keep his commandments. Since the only way to know him is by obedience, it follows that, if a man is living in disobedience, his confession is false, for he could not get to know God except through

obedience. He is a liar, false himself, and of course the truth cannot find any place in him. If we say we have fellowship with him, and still walk in darkness, we are telling a falsehood.[1] But he who professes to know God and does not keep his commandments makes *himself* false. To deny that we have committed sin is to assume an attitude toward God which, if true, makes him a liar. On the other hand, to say that we know God, while we still continue to disregard his instructions to his children, shows that we ourselves are false ; we more than lie, we *are* liars. Obedience precedes knowledge as the sun does the dawning of the day. Believe me, there is no way of knowing God but the common practice of obedience in daily life.

But if John uses the word " know " here in its highest sense, to be one with, then how can a man be one with God, and yet disregard his commandments? Hence to know God is to be in vital fellowship with him, to fulfill the relationship that we sustain, to be in harmony with him in thought, in feeling, and in choice.

The word keep, used here (*τηρέω—tereo*), means a watchful heed to an object, growing out of a loving attachment. It is the spirit, rather than the letter, of obedience. It is not merely obeying a command, but a loving observance of the mind and will of an ever-present person. The man who says he knows the mind and character of this living Being, who says he is one with him, and yet does not take heed to his commandments, that man's whole character is false, and

[1] 1 John 1 : 6.

the truth is not in him regulating his thoughts and actions. When the truth is in a man, it governs him ; when a man is in the truth, he is limited by it—it regulates his thought and actions. When the truth is in a man, it becomes the governing principle of his life from *within ;* when a man is in the truth, it becomes the controlling power of his life from *without*—he moves within its sphere and is limited by its teaching. Truth in the heart will always lead to obedience in the life.

On the other hand, whosoever keeps the word of God is not only true because having the truth in him, but in him also is the love of God perfected. This is not merely a care for the "thou shalts" and the "thou shalt nots" of the Bible, but for the whole word of God, whether in writing or in a person, in the Scriptures or in Christ. This implies, first of all, an adjustment of our whole being to God as revealed in his Son, to "know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Now, every one who has a tender regard for the word of God, as thus indicated by John, has the love of God, or the whole benevolent purpose of God, brought to perfection in him. This he has by virtue of his union with the Father and with the Son, and his adjustment and submission and obedience to the whole utterance of God toward man.

The love which God feels toward and imparts to the man becomes an active and divine power *in* the man's life. The whole revelation of God is his character made known. This character is light and love. This light and love reach their end and aim in the man who

tenderly keeps himself in harmony with the word, that is, with the character of God. In observing the word of God the love of God is perfected. The word has a wider sense than commandment. Commandments are outward, the word is both outward and inward. If we keep this word, so that the scope and meaning of the life which that word expresses is realized, then the love of God reaches its goal—has attained perfection.

Next we have the second confession and the sign that follows, "*He that saith he abideth in him.*" The Christian life, in its central depth of fellowship with God in Jesus Christ, is here under consideration. It is, in the spiritual realm, what Paul's assertion respecting the physical life is. "In him we live and move and have our being."[1] In spiritual life the source, the sphere, and the fruit of our life are in Christ. Evidently this is John's meaning here. The Revealer and the Revealed are one to him, and the transition from the one to the other is simple and natural. Paul seldom speaks of our being in the Father, and John only when we are there by virtue of our being in Christ the Son.

The believer is in Christ and Christ is in the believer, and these are the two keywords to the whole Bible. We are chosen, loved, accepted, crucified, raised, and seated in heavenly places in him. We are taken out of ourselves and put down in Christ. This is Paul's view, and in essence it is the same as that of John, who joins us to Christ in the union of life, and we are in him as the branch is in the vine.

[1] Acts 17 : 28.

Now if we are living in Christ, there ought to be a personal confession of it, and immediately an obligation will grow out of that confession. The walk of the Christian ought to be as *he* walked—in every particular as he walked. In the Gospel of John we see the characteristics of eternal life in Christ. In the Epistle the Holy Spirit sets forth the very same characteristics when the life is possessed by us. It must have the same fruit, for it is his own life implanted in us, having the same characteristics in us as in him. He stands out in the full perfection of humanity, and we ought to be repetitions of him. I do not say imitators, for we are reproductions of the Christ-life in the flesh, "delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." The pattern of Christ given in the Bible is always one of sacrifice, humiliation, and suffering. Every pilgrim in time has laid upon him, by virtue of his union with Christ, an obligation to walk even as the great Pilgrim of eternity walked.

We are to obey God as Jesus obeyed him; that is, on the same principles as those on which he obeyed the Father's will. To do the will of God was his meat and drink. It was not obedience in order to obtain life in him, nor is it so in us. Christ is the life, and this life is imparted to us. The words and the ways of Jesus were the expression of that life in all of its perfection, and they direct and guide that life in us. Obedience was the one controlling condition of his being. Obedience should be the same prevailing force in us.

As the body has motions so the spirit has motions. It has thoughts, wishes, volitions. These may move downward, and the things of the earth over which we ought to have so much control may control us, or these emotions of the spirit may be directed upward. Our thoughts, wishes, and impulses may go toward God. In either case all these exercises of soul may be described as a walk, and such was the walk of Christ. He perpetually acknowledged, obeyed, and sought to please the Father. We should walk as he walked, constantly abiding in God, constantly loving men, and persistently continuing in this chosen path. The walk and work of Christ are summed up in the one word love. Accordingly, to walk as he walked resolves itself into brotherly love.

The apparent contradiction in verses seven and eight can be harmonized by seeing that John is impressing upon Christians to whom he writes no novelty, but the same truth that had been taught by Christ, by Paul, and by other Christian teachers. The old commandment of the former teachers and the old commandment of the written word of God becomes a new commandment, because it has a higher and deeper, although not a different meaning now. It was old because long known to the Christians. But when it came to them at first it was entirely new. It was new to the Jews, because it was never fully taught in their Scriptures, and never before enforced by the example and authority of Jesus.[1]

It was a new thing in Christ, and it is new in us. It

[1] John 13 : 34.

was true in him and true in us. This new meaning comes since the darkness, based on hatred, is passing away from us, because of the true light which is shining in its fullness through him. This light shines first through Christ, and in a measure through us who have received him. Hence the old words are now filled with new power. The living embodiment of the word of God as seen in Christ, and our reproduction of him, walking as he walked, gives a clearer light to the world. Here is something actually before men's eyes, true in Christ and true in the members of his church, first illustrated in Christ and then imparted to us. It is realized both in Christ and in the believer in union with him.

In the Old Testament it was an outward commandment. In the New, the essence of that commandment is revealed in Christ. "Hear ye *him*." So that now, to us, it is not only a commandment but also a person. As that thing, life, was true in Jesus, it is true in his children as partakers of his nature. It is true in him and in them. So that the darkness is now drawn from the face of the earth as a curtain, and the light is beginning to dawn upon it—the light that is revealed by Christ and is received and reflected by the church.

Lastly we come to consider confession of union in light. "He that saith he is in the light." In the first chapter we had, "If we say that we have fellowship with him" who is light; but "He that saith he is *in* the light," means something more than fellowship with it. Thus we have a steady advance: To know him, to be in him, to abide in him, and to be in the

light, because we are in him. We have a clearly defined advance from knowledge to union, from union to communion, from communion to stability, and from stability to illumination.

Here, in this phrase, man is surrounded by an atmosphere of divine glory. He is in spiritual light as Israel was in the midst of physical light. Light is caused by the presence of the sun, and spiritual light is caused by the presence of God. To Israel it was a visible light guiding the feet, but to us it is within, guiding the heart.

"*He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness.*" The brother, in this place, doubtless means the Christian, although others are not excluded. It is, at least, the one to whom he has assumed the relationship of brother. Dr. Westcott says: "There is, as it appears, no case where a fellow-man, *as man*, is called a brother in the New Testament." But other than Christians are not under consideration in this passage. It is here, exactly as in the tenth of John, where we have the parable of the sheep and the Good Shepherd. There is nothing said about the goats there, and nothing is said about the world here. The brethren are those who are united to God through Jesus Christ. Now to hate the brother reveals a moral state the opposite of that which is claimed by the man who professes that he is in the light. Light and love are identified, just as darkness and hatred; in both cases they go together. Spotless purity and fervent affection go hand in hand.

To be in the light, therefore, will be to love the brother. To hate a brother will be an evidence of abiding in the darkness. He that loves abides in the light, and he that abides in the light loves. In the light we not only see God, and are seen by him, but we see our brother and we are drawn to him.

Such persons as abide in the light have no occasion to stumble, neither will they cause others to stumble, nor will they create difficulties for themselves. "Great peace have they who love thy law." They see their brethren, but do not stumble against them. Love gives a single, but a connected and clear prospect, while hatred engenders questions and doubts and difficulties. Want of love is the most prolific source of offense; but if a man hates, then he is in darkness, he walks in darkness, does not know where he is going, nor does he perceive the nature of the path leading to his destination, and darkness has blinded his eyes. His position is such that he could not see the true path even if restored to the light—he has no eyes to see. His blindness is one of long standing, a state from which he was supposed to have recovered.

Thus we see that the Christian is in fellowship with light, although he has sinned in the past. Although he may sin in the present, yet he is still in fellowship by the blood and person of Christ. We see here that this fellowship with light and life puts upon him—the one who confesses it—an obligation to obey, to imitate, and to love. But this obligation comes after the revelation and the life, and after forgiveness and intercession.

Then, and not until then, does the obligation to this higher and holier walk come upon our lives. Life comes before the flower, the fragrance, and the fruit in the natural world. "They that are planted in the house of the Lord" have first their divine life, afterward the flower of obedience, then the fragrance of a Christlike character, and the ripened fruit of unwearied love will follow in its season.

CHAPTER VI

THE FADING WORLD AND THE ABIDING CHURCH

1 John 2 : 12–17

HAVING considered our relation to God in light and our obligation to him in a three-fold union of knowledge, life, and light, John proceeds to speak of our attitude toward the world. Incidentally, he had mentioned that light and love were but two forms of one essence. Just as heat, light, and motion are three forms of one force in the natural world, so life, light, and love are different forms of one force in the spiritual world. To be in the light, therefore, involved a love for the discovered brother, walking also within its glow. Immediately there comes before the mind of this great apostle the danger of having love go out to objects not in harmony with the "Father of Light." Hence, in tenderness he calls the family of faith about him and proceeds to warn them against loving the world in any of its outward forms or in any of its inward possessions.

There has been much discussion as to whether John is here dividing Christians into three classes or two—whether "little children," in ver. 12 and 13, includes the whole church or a part of it. On the whole, it seems to be probable that by these terms he is designating the whole church. This is shown from the follow-

ing reasons : (1) The word in the Greek is not the same in both verses as is the case in the mention twice made of young men and fathers. In ver. 12 it is a term of endearment corresponding to our word child, while that in ver. 13 generally stands for infants. (2) These words (*τεκνία—teknia* and *παιδία—paidia*) are often used by John when speaking of the whole body of believers.[1] (3) Our Lord himself uses both these terms when addressing his disciples.[2] (4) If John had meant to represent three different classes, he would surely have put them in some order ; either children, young men, and fathers, or fathers, young men, and children—either an ascending or a descending scale ; but he has not done so. If we take "children" to stand for the whole church, then the order is maintained of fathers and young men in both the present and past forms of the word "write."

In this first term of tender, fatherly address he mentions two things true of them all as children in the family : their sins are forgiven and they have come to know the Father. As "children" they are forgiven—they have both the nature and the forgiveness of their Father, into whose family they have been born. As "little ones" they know the Father ; and as knowledge implies obedience, the idea of subordination is emphasized here as kinship is in the previous verse. So John writes to the whole church as one who shares its spiritual nature and is set in authority over it. On the other hand, we are bound one to another by virtue of

[1] 2 : 18, 28 ; 3 : 7, 18 ; 4 : 4 ; 5 : 21. [2] John 13 : 33 and 21 : 5.

our common life in Christ, because we are "children," and as "little ones" we recognize our weakness and dependence upon the care of our Father.

But whether we emphasize our relation as his children or our subordination as his little ones, Christ is at once the source of the knowledge of God and of the forgiveness of sins. Knowing him, we know the Father also.[1] It is immediate and direct knowledge, and involves a belief in the love revealed and submission to the authority proclaimed. The forgiveness is a present possession of the whole family, and it is given "for his name's sake." Because Jesus is what his name expresses,—the Jehovah Saviour, appointed by God as the channel of mercy,—God forgives and imparts life to all who put faith in him. We believe in his name for life[2] and we believe in his name for forgiveness.[3] Hence the whole aim of John's writing in the Gospel was, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing ye might have life in his name."

Now then under this general term, applicable to all believers alike, we have "fathers" and "young men." The first term marks both age and eminence in spiritual things in the church. These fathers had come to know God as the One from the beginning. They understood that from the unbegun beginning—from everlasting—the One revealed in Jesus was the true God. Such a knowledge would imply an apprehension of the divine thought (δοκέω) which is akin to his glory (δοξά)—the divine thought in eternity which is fulfilled in time.

[1] John 14 : 7. [2] John 1 : 12. [3] Acts 4 : 30 and 10 : 43.

Such a believer brought into fellowship with God through such knowledge would be a father in the church.

The young men had overcome the evil one and were strong. The source of their strength and the secret of their victory is the indwelling of the word of God. They had conquered, once and for all, by knowing God and by passing from the power of Satan to God. Being in living contact with the source of life, their youthful vigor was directed to a divine end by the inward power of the divine voice. The individual, hand-to-hand aspect of the Christian life in its contest with the individual who is the source and prince of darkness, is brought out here in the address to young men.

Thus the whole church is drawn to the apostle's heart as children who share with him divine life and full forgiveness, and who owe to him submission and reverence. Then he addresses the "fathers" who have gained knowledge and the "young men" who are strong, who have the word of God abiding in them, and who have gained and maintained a mastery over the evil one. Fathers have been given for contemplation and youths for active service. Having drawn the believers to his heart and having appealed to attainments in knowledge made by the aged and to the victory and strength possessed by those youthful in years, he proceeds with a solemn warning in the form of a command.

The repetition of "I write" and "I wrote" might refer to what *had* been written in the Gospel and also to what John was then writing in this Epistle. But it

is better to consider the change of tense as indicating John's feelings while writing, then afterward as contemplating its perusal by those to whom it was sent. "I write" marks the writing, and "I have written," the reading. Its emphasis gives weight to the exhortation.

"*Love not the world.*" If the conjecture is right that John had before his mind the form of the tabernacle, as some think, this command accords with that thought. He had considered the nature and grace of God as set forth in the symbols of the Most Holy Place, then the character and testimony which ought to be maintained by his children as presented by the dumb but impressive symbols of the Holy Place, and now we may assume that he retires to the outer court, and to its relation with the camp. Here he comes into contact with the world.

What is meant by "the world" here needs to be clearly understood. It stands for that whole order of things in the human race which is estranged from God, and which is hostile, both to him and to his people. Its natural enmity and its inherent opposition to God are of its essence. For the most part, in the mind of John, "the world" is humanity—the human race—alienated from the life of God. It also includes Satan, the demons under his direction, and so much of the material world as shares the stain and estrangement of the race.

At first it seems almost startling to be forbidden to love that which God himself loves. He loves this

estranged, hating, and sin-stained world. He gave a proof of that love that cannot be doubted. But it is one thing to love the world that it may be saved, and its moral character changed ; it is quite another to love the world that it may be possessed and enjoyed as it is now estranged from God. It is one thing to love it back to God, and altogether a different thing to love it apart from God. We may love, we *must* love the world of men, if we are to be true children of the true God ; but the outward *form* of their organized life and the things around which they gather, we may not love. The world of men, as men, is the marred and ruined creation of God ; but the world of men in its organized life is Satan's dominion and God's rival. To love the one is to imitate God as the philanthropist —the man-lover.[1] To love the other is to imitate Satan as a murderer—a man-killer.[2] To love the world in the former sense is to have the love of a father toward a wayward boy, while he may have the deepest hatred of his ways and sorrow for his sins. To love the world in the latter way is the love of this prodigal boy by a boon companion who sympathizes with his principles and shares his sins. The lawfulness or unlawfulness of the love, therefore, depends upon the character of the one who loves. God being what he is may do what man may not do—not because of the love in either case, but because of the *ends* which the love seeks to attain. God looks through the surface to the possibilities beyond ; man looks at the ap-

[1] Titus 3 : 4. [2] John 8 : 44.

pearance, and enters into its pleasures. The world is the same, but the love is different. God's love of the world is a divine compassion, while ours is a selfish desire and pride.

The world then, against which John warns us, is all of that organized form of life which we see before us, moving on in various ways apart from God. In one country it may be under the control of a single individual, as in the days of imperial Rome ; in others, under the guidance of the people, as in many nations to-day ; or it may be that lawless abandonment of uncivilized life still prevalent over a large part of the human race. But whatever form human society may assume, from the most autocratic authority, demanding the blindest obedience, on the one hand, down to the wildest disregard of governmental control on the other, that society will still represent man alienated from the life of God, indifferent to the claims of God, and disobedient to the commands of God. And in the circle of each person's existence, the whole of that floating mass of thought, purpose, plan, principle, maxim, aim, —indeed, everything that surrounds us,—represents the world.

God constituted the world with Adam at its head, and it was well-pleasing to him. It was man's world with God's love trusted, God's authority acknowledged, God's command obeyed, and God's glory worshiped. But Satan came in and preached a lie—instilled doubt as to God's goodness and a disbelief of the truth. This lie was believed and acted upon by the united

head of the race, and thereupon a new world—a new moral world—was formed. It has continued to exist in unbroken rebellion until to-day. Of this world Satan is the ruler, apart from God.[1] He inspires its purposes, directs its energies, and molds its character, by virtue of the lie which he first proclaimed, and which man persists in believing. To love that world, thus formed and maintained, is to love what was begun in a slander upon the character of God, constituted in defiance of his government, and upheld in opposition to his will. Love not this world. It is a guilty, condemned, Christ-hating, Christian-hating world. Its fashion is passing away ; its friendship is enmity to God ; and its pollutions are an abomination to him. Having fallen from a trust in the love of God, it now lies prostrate under the malignity of the devil. It is an essential part of pure religion to keep unspotted from this world.

"*Nor the things in the world.*" It is possible for a man to deny that he loves the world while he pursues, with keenest scent, many of the things that are in the world. The pleasures, honors, riches, and places of authority in the world, pursued as an *end*, are clearly forbidden. The continued pursuit of the things of the world leads to the loss of a sense of the presence of God, and of our relation to him as Father.

"*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" This means that the love of God does not abide in him as an abiding principle. The desire

[1] John 12 : 31 ; Eph. 2 : 2.

for the world comes *from* the world. Nothing rises higher than its source. It is, therefore, inconsistent with love from the Father returning to the Father, to love the world. There can be no room for two opposing loves in one heart, any more than for two rival kings on one throne. It is impossible to serve God *and* mammon. Either may be served, but not both. To be friends of the world is to make ourselves enemies of God.[1] To please men alienated from God is to part from Christ, the Revealer of God.[2] How these contrasts of John strike home to the heart! Light and darkness, truth and falsehood, love and hate, the love of the Father and the love of the world, cannot exist together. It is impossible for a child to love his father while walking in the ways, loving the principles, and rejoicing in the aims of that father's foes, plotting the devastation of his estate and the ruin of his home. The two are so opposed that love for both is a moral impossibility.

"*All that is in the world*," embraces both the outward material things and the lusts which lead to their love. This outward world enticing, and this inward world responding, are called the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." That is all the world has—there is nothing more in it. It is the world's anti-trinity—the Father and the world, the Son and the devil, the Spirit and the flesh. But how various the forms they assume and how marvelous the power they exert. The first lust springs out of the flesh,

[1] James 4 : 4. [2] Gal. 1 : 10.

or the heart of the natural man ; the second springs out of our ability to take knowledge of things without, and it is inflamed by their appearance ; while the third belongs to our manner of life, leading to pompous display. To have, or the lust of the flesh ; to see, or the lust of the eye ; and to be seen, or the pride of life, sums it all up. We desire wrongly, and we display what we own or what we have seen wrongly. We desire with a wrong spirit what we can make our own or what we can only see, and then we masquerade with a glory not our own.

"*The lust of the flesh*" does not mean the lusts of the body. The body by itself has no desires, except as it becomes the channel to express the life which is rooted within the body. It stands for those desires which inhere in our depraved natures—for covetousness, as well as uncleanness, which are said to belong to our members upon the earth. The lusts have their seat in what is called "the mind of the flesh."[1] But gluttony, drunkenness, and uncleanness are not always the most dangerous forms of this unlawful desire. A dark catalogue of them is given in Gal. 5 : 19–21. These forms of lust may be inflamed in the most insidious way. They may come as an angel of light through the gems of literature, the cadence of poetry, the warmth of art, or the swell of music. It is not enough to be out of the world, but the world must be kept out of us.

"*The lust of the eyes*" is the unlawful desire which the eye begets by seeing. It stands for those desires of

[1] Rom. 8 : 6.

which the eyes are the organ. While the flesh stands for appropriation, the eye stands for contemplation—the flesh for physical and the eye for mental pleasure. Outward beholding may become inward action. David became envious when he saw the prosperity of the wicked. His great fall and subsequent shame, and the chastening rod which followed him to the grave, came through the lust of the eye. "Eyes full of an adulteress, and that cannot cease from sin" is a terrible description of the degradation to which the eyes may be reduced.

"*The pride of life*" sums up the balance of what there is in the world. The other two channels of temptation may be indulged alone, but this one must be exercised in company with others. It stands for vainglory, arrogance, pretentious show, gasconade, "swagger." It stands for the fashion of our living, our house, furniture, table, equipage, dress, rank, and even for our faces and forms, and the vanity and pride with which we display them. It is a false view of values.

It is right to desire to possess that which may support life and minister to others. The gratification of our sense of beauty can no more be wrong than the gratification of our hunger or thirst. There is a true desire of having and there is a pure love of beauty.

There may, however, be an unlawful desire to have at the expense of another; there may be a low appreciation of art and a degrading pride. This pride will make demands for recognition, unjustified by facts. It will make claims to which it has no right, to gratify its

strutting propensities, and this is the world we may not, must not, love.

The world's glitter attracts and we respond, seeking its prizes to keep up appearances. With the cultured world—with any world for that matter—all must be in correct form and in good style. It is the world's pride to be creditable in its own eyes. What is not so must be toned down or concealed by a falsehood. It is better to lie than to appear to be in bad form. The outward life must be grand and graceful, decent and respectable, and in the polite world the veneer of chivalry and courtesy are added. No matter how wretched and rotten within, no matter how sinful and selfish beneath the surface, all must be correct on the outside. Do what you please, but do not be talked about—let it not "transpire."

Oh, what struggles we make and what burdens we bear to outdo, outmaneuver, and outshine one another! The lusts of the flesh can be crucified, the lusts of the eye may be overcome by the charity which envieth not, but the pride of life, who can check? Men are more afraid of breaking a rule of etiquette than they are of breaking the law of Moses. They are more afraid of a descent from some choice pinnacle of respectability than of an act of disloyalty to Christ. It was said of a certain European prince that he broke the seventh commandment with a titled lady, and then "perjured himself like a gentleman to protect her." What a revelation of "the whited sepulchre of the world." The good opinion of the world must be re-

nounced at times if we would be true to God at all hazards.

These temptations correspond to those presented to our first parents, and afterward to our Lord. The lust of the flesh answers to the "good for food" in the fruit; "a delight to the eyes" corresponds to the lust of the eyes; to "become as God" was an appeal to the pride of life. The same was offered to Jesus. He was asked to make bread out of stones; to bow down to Satan that he might get possession of the world displayed before his eyes; and to dash himself from a high pinnacle, in order to show the care of the angels bearing him up, that he dash not his foot against a stone. Our Lord withstood every attack by saying: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. . . Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve. . . Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." This was the response made by our victorious Lord to the wiles of the devil. Man shall not disobey God to gratify an appetite; he shall not bow down to Satan to gain possession of what the eye may covet; and he shall not put God to the test to gratify his pride. Jesus conquered where the first Adam failed, and through his victory we too may overcome the world.

All these things are "not of the Father." As originally constituted, everything in the world that attracted man, and every desire responding thereto, were of God. The desire was good, and the object desired good, because all tended to fulfill man's relation to God and to

harmonize with the whole order of the world. Even to exult was good, because it was an acknowledgment of the divine goodness. But now the order is disturbed. The desire is suggested by the creation and not by the Creator, every attraction is molded by man alienated from God, and not by the Father to whom the obedient child should look for guidance. It thus happens that every false tendency is but the corruption of what was once a noble instinct. The three channels of our ruin are all that is left of the *sense of dependence*, the *appreciation of beauty*, and the *desire to be grateful—trust, joy, and worship*. The mind that *now* controls the scene is from Satan and leads to his ends. That mind which springs from God in the new creation through Christ, and that alone, is directed toward God. God's love gave Christ, and he begat us again in that love, and the instincts of the new life naturally return to its source. It cannot be directed toward the world any more than that perverted love which springs from the world, and which is directed toward its lusts, can turn toward God. John lays bare the inmost kernel and shows the essential difference in origin and aim of the love of the world and the love of God in this passage.

We have seen that we must not love the world because two master passions cannot exist in the same heart at the same moment. We have also seen that nothing of the present order of things is of God. All these things have been created by him, but the use to which they have been put, and the ends which they are made to serve, are not of God. The world is now formed

around the lie of Satan, and it is made the rival of God. Devotion to the world and loyalty to God are as impossible as to look both ways or to run in two directions at the same moment.

We are now shown still further that the *fate* of the world is inherent in its character. All that is in the world, the objects without and the desires within, are passing away even now. The love of the world and the love of God are different in origin, aim, and *ends*. The one abides forever, and the other vanishes forever. The whole world, in its present social dependencies, governmental arrangements, and physical forms, will pass away. Although he tarry long, God will finally make a full end of the reign of Satan and of sin in the universe. The kingdom of darkness is but for a day. It carries within it the seeds of its own destruction. Lusts, in a still more depraved form, may be carried out into another world, but the gratification, even for a moment, will be forever removed.[1]

Over against this command to withhold love from the world is placed the inducement *to do* the will of God. Not idleness from evil, but activity in that which is good, is the path marked out for the child of God. "*He that doeth the will of God abideth forever.*" While everything which gathers about the confused world formed by Satan comes to a speedy end, eternal fixedness belongs to the order of things that gather about God and his will. He has a great purpose; all things are arranged for its attainment, and his will is

[1] Luke 16 : 24.

leading on, without a shadow of change, to this great end. We need to understand the will of God as connected with this great plan, and then to love and do that will. We must set aside our desires to have, to see, and to shine, in this world. Our own will and the will of the world must be replaced by the sweet will of God. By doing his will we *begin* to do here what will be continued yonder. When everything else changes, the obedience of love remains the same. Commencing to do the will of God now, we "shall abide forever"—"*unto the age*"—until that age which introduces the new order of things that abides forever. That which takes the place of desire for the world and the things within it is the living and active believer in Christ doing the will of God. The will of God obeyed is the final end of all things. When that comes it will be the health, the harmony, the music, and the glory of the universe. We shall then have the moral music of the spheres. Whosoever doeth the will of God is a mother, a sister, and a brother to the Son of God, and *he* is the new center around which everything is made to reorganize in truth, righteousness, and glory. The world formed about Satan will pass away, but the new order, aggregating around God in Christ, shall abide forever. The divine love of the Father will then be overshadowed by the divine majesty of God—the kingdom will have been delivered up, that God may be all in all.

Let us be careful not to substitute anything else for the will of God. Satan has wiles to deceive. He will speak of abstaining from meat and marriage, and point

to the sanctity of a retirement from the activities of life in the seclusion of the cloister. He will encourage austere habits in self and severe judgments upon others. But Jesus Christ had no perplexities about going in and out among his fellows, and partaking freely of those things which came as "the riches of his goodness." He moved freely where the Pharisees were restrained. And this was true because he was always doing the will of God, whether he was in company with the punctilious Pharisees, the rationalistic Sadducees, or the wretched harlots and sinners. If we are bent upon doing the will of God difficulties will vanish. The world and its lusts are passing away, just as we have already seen that the darkness is passing away. But doing the will of God, like the light which is now shining, will abide forever. He that serves the world will share its fate, while he who does the will of God will share his life. As for the earth and the heavens, "They shall wax old as doth a garment, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same and thy years shall not fail."

"I worship thee, sweet will of God,
And all thy ways adore;
And every day I live, I long
To love thee more and more.
. . . . . .
"He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost;
God's will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost."

CHAPTER VII

THE ANTICHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN

1 John 2 : 18–29

We must bear in mind that the apostle's closing thought in the preceding verse was the passing away of the world in its present, organized form. John had before his mind the *world of men*, and not the *world of matter*. It did not derive its principles and aims from the Father, and must therefore come to an end. But John knew from the teaching of the prophets and from the great discourse delivered by our Lord on Mount Olivet just before his crucifixion,[1] that the end of the gospel age would be marked by a daring apostasy under the Antichrist. Finding that there were many in his day exhibiting its characteristics, he said, "*Little children, it is a last hour*"—it is an hour showing, in *germ*, the ripened wickedness of an apostate world when its hour of doom shall come. It was an hour having in essence all the deception and blasphemy of the closing moments of an apostate age.

The subject under consideration is that aspect of the world which it will speedily assume, making it in a special sense the enemy of Jesus Christ, who is the heir to its dominion. We must keep clearly before us

[1] Matt. 24 : 1–23.

the meaning of "world." It may include the material order of things, but here John had in view the social order and political arrangements—the maxims, the way of doing things among men, in fact, everything that goes to make up human society as it is now constituted. When the world, as thus understood, passes away, Antichrist will be at its head. But John declares that there are already many antichrists in the world who *profess* to be anointed of God, but they need not lead us astray, because we have from God the true anointing. These anointed and anti-anointed are placed over against each other here—Christ and the Antichrist, the Christians and the antichristians.

In the previous chapter the contest described was with the world ; now the struggle is between the true Christian and the hostile power rising within and proceeding from the Christian society. He speaks, not merely of the antichristian system outside of the church, but of the antichristian system inside of the church, although both forms of rebellion will exist at that time. From the Scriptures we know that the last apostasy will have Christian light, Grecian intellect, Roman power, and Oriental splendor all concentrated. The last assault upon the truth of God will be under the leadership of one who is Greek in origin and character, Roman in power, Oriental in majesty, Jewish in the sphere of his action, and Christian in the form of his apostasy. These things are made known in a fully developed form in the Apocalypse. In the twelfth chapter we have the imperial power of the world against

which the church will have to contend; and in the thirteenth chapter the power of the false prophet going out from the professed church. Because these false teachers were already going out at *that time* it is called *a* last hour, not *the* last hour.[1] (So, Westcott and others.) It had the characteristics of the last stage of the Christian dispensation. In Second Thessalonians we learn that the Lord cannot come (or be present) until the apostasy takes place and the man of sin is revealed.[2] His manifestation would be in the hour immediately preceding the advent.

The conception of the last time or "last hour" rests upon the Old Testament, in which that very phrase occurs. Examples may be seen in Gen. 49 : 1; Num. 24 : 14; and Isa. 2 : 2. Sometimes it refers to the millennial age, as in the second chapter of Isaiah. Here it refers to that period of apostasy and trial which is to usher in the millennium or the age to come. And hence when the teachers in the Old or the New Testament refer to the last hour of human society, they always speak of it as a season of unequaled trouble, through which God shall establish the reign of righteousness. And this is the real idea of the phrase in the New Testament where the words time, days, and hours occur.[3] There is a sense in which this "last hour" is

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[1] "The last hour, *i. e.*, the end of the age, and very near the return of Christ from heaven."—"Grimm's Lexicon," Thayer.

[2] There is a strong preponderance of opinion in favor of the view that the Antichrist of St. John is the same as the man of sin or great adversary of St. Paul.

[3] 1 Tim. 4 : 1; 2 Tim. 3 : 1; Matt. 24 : 29, 30; James 5 : 3.

an indefinite period. We speak in the same way of the "day of Napoleon," "the hour of the Revolution." It designates an indefinite time immediately preceding the coming of the Lord. John had just said that the world was passing away, and that those who were doing the will of God would continue "until the age," that is, until the age when the risen saints would never die, and also until the coming of "the age of ages," the everlasting state. Now he proceeds to say that the Christians of that day had already entered into a phase of that last hour. The last days of John were characterized by a number of "antichrists" foreshadowing the personal Antichrist of the future.

"*As ye have heard that Antichrist cometh.*" Westcott says concerning this verse: "The absence of the article shows that the term had become current as a technical or proper name." The early Christians were all taught concerning the coming of this monster. But if they were to have "the rapture" *before* the Antichrist, why this instruction?

On the principle that "coming events cast their shadows before them" these antichrists appeared as adumbrations of the coming climax of evil in church and world. There is no denying the fact that in apostolic and post-apostolic days the common belief of the Christians was that the Antichrist would immediately *precede* the return of the Lord. It will be admitted that between the days of John and his return no event in the world's history has occurred or will occur comparable to the advent; therefore this intervening time

was naturally called "a last hour." Accordingly, all through early Christian literature we find, not only the constant hope and expectation of the return of the Lord, *but also a constant dread of the coming of the Antichrist.* Warburton says: "The late appearance of Antichrist was a doctrine so universally received in the primitive church that it was like a proverbial saying among them." Westcott says: "As we look forward a season of sore distress separates us from that which is still to be revealed." And again he says: "In post-biblical times the age to come was sharply distinguished from the *period of trial by which it was to be ushered in,* and the latter days came to be regarded as a season of conflict and suffering through which the divine victory should be accomplished." It is a fact well worth careful consideration that not even *once,* in any Christian writing up till the middle of the nineteenth century, is there the faintest hope expressed that the church would escape this time of trouble during the night of Antichrist.

The term Antichrist occurs only here and in 4 : 3, and also in 2 John 7. There can be no doubt, however, that the same person is referred to as "the lawless one," "the man of sin," "the deceiver," and other terms. The word Antichrist indicates both the person and the character of one yet to come. Originally the word "anti" meant over against or opposite to. Hence it is used in exchange and in buying and selling. Things that were exchanged were set over against each other as having the same value. In time

it came to mean that which is the equivalent, that which corresponds to ; for the equivalent of anything is regarded as standing in its stead. It is used in this sense of Archelaus who reigned (*anti*) instead of his father. Thus the Antichrist is the one who stands over against and will seek to supplant the Christ. He will fulfill our Lord's words spoken to the Jews, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not ; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." The Antichrist is coming in his own name, and him they will receive. He will not come in behalf of Christ, but against him and against those who are Christ's. He will not be a vicar or vicegerent, as the pope claims to be, but a supplanter, as Absalom was. For this reason he is called the Antichrist. Those who in John's day denied the incarnation, opened the door for this adversary in the day to come.

His coming will be to the Jews ; but just as both Jews and Gentiles united in rejecting the Christ, so will the Gentile apostasy unite with the Jews in receiving the Antichrist. The apostate Jews and the unbelieving Gentiles crucified the Christ in the past ; but the apostate church and the unbelieving Jews will unite in deifying the Antichrist in the future.

It will thus come to pass that in "the last hour," or the end of this age, the Jewish and Gentile apostasy will do just the opposite of what was done when Christ came. Then they rejected the true prophet and the true Christ ; in the coming day they will receive the false prophet and the false Christ. When Christ was

on earth he was the embodiment of God, and they said he was in league with the devil; when the Antichrist comes, he will be the embodiment of the devil, and they will say he is in league with God. They called white black then, they will call black white in that time to come. They put the incarnate God upon the cross in the past, they will put the embodiment of the devil upon the throne in the future. They have executed God in the flesh, they will worship the devil personified.

It is the purpose of God, before long, to have the Man who is his "fellow" manifested on earth as the center and channel of knowledge, majesty, glory, and power. Just prior to that day, Satan, anticipating the action of God, will put his own glory upon an individual man, and the world will be carried away with his dazzling achievements. As in the days of our Lord there were some Jews who wanted signs and prodigies, and some Greeks who wanted wit and wisdom, so will it be at the end of this age. There will be a demand for the miraculous, the wonderful, the unnatural, and there will be a demand also for some one of great mental calibre and ingenuity, somebody to dazzle the world and command its admiration. The devil in his own time will supply that demand, and the person who meets it will be the Antichrist. This will come to pass because such is the will of that evil spirit that worketh in the sons of disobedience, and also because men will delight to see one of themselves exalted to power. All of the intellect, knowledge, arts and arms of men, and

all of the glory and majesty that have characterized the ancient monarchies, will be combined in one man. The divided power and the scattered intellect of former ages will be so centered in him that he will be a personification of the past, and the dead will seem to live again. He will be that Agamemnon for whom the world has longed and waited. All of the Antichristian principles that have existed in various forms from apostolic days to the very end, will be brought into systematized unity under this coming man. He will be the Saul of man's choosing, preceding the Son of David, whom God will make the King of kings. He will combine all the earthly glories of worldly monarchs from Nimrod to Cæsar, and he will be the climax of earthly greatness, a "king of men," a slave of Satan, a usurper against Christ, and an enemy of God.

The coming of this Antichrist is really *the feature* that is now before us. "That day (of Christ's coming and our gathering to him) will not be except the falling away come first."[1] There is no use of picturing and preaching bright and hopeful things concerning the present course of events. This age will certainly terminate in the reception of the *false* Christ as the former age terminated in the rejection of the *true* Christ. Christ refused to reign over unregenerated men; but the Antichrist will eagerly seek such a dominion. Christ refused to reign in this age, deferring his day until the age to come; but the Antichrist will exalt himself above every object of worship at the close

[1] 2 Thess. 2 : 3.

of this age in which we live, and for a short time reign supreme.

The pope seeks to reign now, and aims to establish rule over men who are nominally regenerated because they are "christened." This has led many people to suppose that he is the Antichrist. Some future pope may become that Antichrist, and Romanism is doubtless a shadow of the coming antichristian system in many particulars. But no pope has ever yet *filled to the full* the *rôle* of the Antichrist—not one of them has denied the fact that Christ has come in the flesh, although most of them have denied the self-emptying Spirit which he manifested when he came "in the likeness of sinful flesh." Moreover, when the Antichrist does appear, Christ will immediately appear and destroy him, according to Second Thessalonians. Popery has existed for many centuries and our Lord has not yet come. The pope, therefore, is not the Antichrist. But the rise of the trades-unions, almost entirely controlled by Romanists, and the patronizing attitude of the present pope toward the masses, point to a possible union of these two forces which may culminate in the antichristian system, with a coming pope at its head. Who knows? It is more probable, however, that the Antichrist will be a secular prince, and that some future pope may be the "false prophet" of Revelation.

This truth concerning the Antichrist was part of the original message given by our Lord and his apostles.[1]

[1] See Mark 13 : 6; Matt. 24 : 5, 24; Acts 20 : 30; 1 Tim. 4 : 1, 2; 2 Thess. 2 : 1-11.

The early Christians, therefore, were constantly on the outlook for the spirit of Antichrist in false teaching. It cannot be claimed that what is said in this Epistle of John and in Second Thessalonians is Jewish. These letters are distinctively Christian. Now, if the Antichrist is to come *after* the "rapture of the church," it would seem very strange that so much should be said to the church about his coming, his characteristics, his career, and his crisis. The warning concerning this coming deceiver and persecutor is given to the Christians in the New Testament with greater fullness and frequency than to the Jews in the Old. The fact that *both* bodies are directly warned against tribulation and the one who inaugurates it, seems to indicate that they will *both* be concerned in the trying events of that awful hour.

In the days of the apostles certain persons "went out" from the church. Until going out, they could not be distinguished from the rest. They looked, acted, and prayed like them, but they never drew their life from Christ as true believers. They professed to speak with the voice of Christ, having come from a Christian community. Their apostasy revealed the fact that they never had any vital union with Christ. They went out in accordance with the divine will, that it might be manifest that they were not truly of the church. God desires a separation between those who know his Son and those who know him not, and the only real test is the likeness or unlikeness of their character to that Son in walk, and their confession or denial of his name in testimony.

True believers have the power of discerning the real character of these deceivers and of distinguishing them from the anointed ones, or Christians. The prophets, the priests, and the kings of old were anointed, and all the Christians are now prophets, priests, and kings in Christ. They have the anointing of the Holy Ghost. Jesus was anointed without measure as our Head.[1] We, as members of his body, are also anointed by the Holy Spirit.[2] The anointing is from the Holy One—the One revealed in Christ, and in whom is no darkness at all. There will be some in that day professing to be anointed of God and are not, but the Christians, who really are anointed, will be able to detect the hollowness and deception of these teachers. Hence he says, "Ye know all things," or, "*Ye all know,*" *and* . . . "*need not that any one teach you.*" That is, you have no need that any one teach you that Christ is come; you know that, and you know that no lie can have any connection with that truth of God. Becoming anointed thus, we are made like little children in simplicity. And it comes to pass here, as it is seen in the earthly family—men would frequently rather accept the judgment of an innocent woman, or of a little child, about the character of a stranger, than to trust their own judgment. So, the enlightenment given, and the simplicity created, by the anointing of the Holy Ghost, quickens the discernment and corrects the judgment of the saints. It is the office of the Paraclete to guide into all truth.[3] It thus happens that those who are anointed by God in Christ

[1] Comp. Luke 4 : 18 with Isa. 61 : 1. [2] 2 Cor. 1 : 21. [3] John 16 : 13.

are so brought into sympathy with him that they can detect and resist those who are influenced by the spirit of Satan, and are "antichrists." The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, and it is a token that we are of the Father and of the Son when we have received him.

Hence "*ye know all things.*" They have a belief and certain knowledge of certain great fundamental facts and they cannot be deceived. "No man calls Jesus Lord except by the Holy Ghost," and the man who in his heart accepts Jesus Christ, knows more than the greatest unbelieving philosopher can teach him.[1] "Evil men understand not judgment, but they that seek the Lord understand all things." The Christian system is not represented as containing "elements of truth," nor yet "more truth than any other system," but it contains *all truth* that is essential. *It is either everything, or worse than nothing.* All modern attempts at a "comparison of religions" is an insult to the Founder of the Christian system. You can no more compare Christianity with other religious systems, than you can compare the living God with other gods. There are no other gods, they are idols; there are no systems of truth that meet the needs of men, they are deceptions.

The believer, having learned of the Father, knows the truth and knows that no lie is of the truth, just as no darkness is of the light. Now if Jesus has not come, then there has been no revelation of the Father. To

[1] John 16 : 13.

reject the Son, therefore, is to set aside the Father, for he can only be known through the Son. Only God can make God known. Both Father and Son are, therefore, set aside by the Antichrist, and also by his advance heralds. And this is done in order that their place may be claimed by himself as an object of worship. He will set aside every acknowledgment that man is dependent upon a power higher than his own, and in the vacuum thus created will seek to establish his throne. Instead of the great truth that God became man he will set up his lie that man is God.

At this point John seems almost to have lost his patience. With the quickness and vivacity of a young man he says: "*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?*" To deny that Jesus is the Anointed of God, in its full significance, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, includes all falsehood. It takes away all connection between God and man. "He is the Antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son." To deny the one is to deny the other, and to deny the Son is to be without the Father. The Father and the Son are correlatives. No man can know the Father except through the Son.[1] The Antichrist however denies the Son, and by so doing he denies and cuts himself off from the Father. If one man sends money to another by a bank draft, to reject the draft is to refuse the money. To reject Christ, through whom the unseen God is revealed and the riches of his grace given, is to reject God himself. But every one who

[1] Matt. 11 : 27.

confesses the Son openly, and receives him in heart, is at once put in fellowship with the Father. He confesses Fatherhood in God and Sonship in Christ and owns the relationship between the Father and the Son, and therefore he knows and has the Son and the Father. But the Antichrist does the exact opposite of this. He maintains a central falsehood in regard to God and his word, in regard to Christ and man, and is therefore the liar above all others. Such a one hath not the Son whom he rejects nor the Father whom he professes to honor. We cannot reject the Son and retain the Father any more than we can reject the rays from the sun and yet accept its light and heat. But the one who confesses the Son—says in his heart the same things about him that the Father says—he already possesses the Father as well as the Son. The only knowledge we can have of the Father is through the Son.

As if closing up the whole of his thought concerning the Christian's relation to the antichristian spirit and to the Antichrist, he says: "*Let that abide in you, which ye heard from the beginning.*" Let the simple truth of the gospel which was received at the beginning abide in you. This seems to teach that God gave to these Christians, through the apostles, all the truth of this dispensation, *at its beginning*. This deposit of truth became the standard for all time. If, therefore, that which had been given to them in the beginning remained in them, they would abide where they were at first placed by grace, "*in the Son and in the Father.*" All the truth of the dispensation was given at its begin-

ning, and to some of the apostolic churches it was all given at the beginning of the spiritual life of the believers in those churches. That truth, and not personal effort, constituted the enduring strength of the Christian. John exhorts his readers to let that gospel truth, in its unity, be unhindered, and to let it be the inspiration and the stability of their life. The loins should be girded with this deposit of truth. If the heart is full of truth it will have no room for falsehood, and if the truth abideth in us then we abide in the Son and in the Father. This completes the promise of eternal life, for eternal life is union with God by a knowledge of his Son.[1] Life is organic union, death is separation. Eternal life is organic union with him who was from the beginning, and it is fittingly called the age-abiding life, or the life of the ages. "These things have I written unto you concerning them that would lead you astray."

He proceeds now to encourage them still more by saying that the anointing which they received remains in them. This is in accordance with other statements about the Holy Spirit, that he would *abide* with us, after we are sealed by him, unto the day of redemption. On account of this they did not need any one to teach them this fundamental truth concerning the Messiahship of Jesus. The Holy Spirit became to them a sure criterion of the Messiahship of Jesus and of the truth. He so illuminated them that they knew they needed a Saviour, and that Jesus Christ was the One who met

[1] John 17 : 3.

their need. They would, therefore, remain firm in that divine fellowship, established by the teachings received at first, and perpetuated by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was sent to make the incarnation of our Lord fully known, and he is ever bringing out something more of the infinite meaning of his person and work. This first teaching contained all that was brought to light in their subsequent experiences. The believer abides in Christ as the Spirit makes him more fully known, even as he made him known in the simple gospel. There is nothing true that does not agree with the original acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah come in the flesh. There is no room for human invention. Westcott says: "This clause excludes all developments of teaching which cannot be shown to exist in *germ* in the original message, and at the same time leaves no room for the invention of fanaticism. *That which was taught first is the absolute standard.*" Truthful words these! There is no room for either the evolution of the rationalist or the progressive revelation in the church of the Romanist.

Now, then, comes another statement which looks still farther into the dim distance of the future. The antichristian teachers of John's day suggested Antichrist in the last hour of this gospel age, showing that even in his day the characteristics of the last hour existed. After John had instructed these believers concerning the characteristics and the final appearance of the Antichrist, he looks ahead *beyond* that dreaded point to something more hopeful. His eye goes out *beyond* the

last hour of this present dispensation, to the supreme event which is to close this age and usher in the age to come. Jesus has been manifested during his life.[1] He was also manifested after his resurrection from the dead to his disciples.[2] He will *again be manifested* "apart from sin unto salvation," at the second advent.[3] John wants these "little children" to have confidence, and not to be shamed away from him at his coming. The figure is that of a loving child, conscious of disloyalty or disobedience when brought into the presence of a father. He does not want us to shrink as a guilty thing surprised. By saying "if he shall appear" he does not throw doubt upon the *fact*, but uncertainty upon the *time* of his coming. At whatever time he may come, abiding in him will secure an open welcome by our hearts. These believers knew that God in Christ is righteous. They claimed to be his children, partakers of the divine nature. "Born of him" is another of those instances where John identifies the Son with the Father. Being born of God in Christ they ought to know that the only proof of this union would be the practice of righteousness like their Father—they ought to show the marks of their parentage. Righteousness is not the condition of sonship, but it is the outgrowth and the consequence of sonship. God is the source of righteousness. Light and heat do not make the sun, but the sun makes light and heat. Righteousness is the sign of sonship, of the abiding power of the new life, and of the anointing of the Holy Ghost.

[1] 1 John 1 : 2; 3 : 5, 8. [2] John 21 : 14. [3] Heb. 9 : 28; Col. 3 : 4.

Only a life consistent with sonship will produce evidence of the abiding presence of Christ in the heart. Mere profession will be a weak reed at that day, but if we rely on Christ we shall have boldness and not be ashamed. We shall lift up our heads without blushing and with joy when the Lord is manifested in glory.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT WE ARE AND WHAT WE SHALL BE

1 John 3 : 1–3

So far as we have gone the prominent features of our Epistle are the living God revealed as light, and the believers' partnership with him and with each other *in* that light. Very naturally the obligations resting upon those who share the light were also enforced from considerations of the most exalted nature. With this third chapter we enter upon the *second division* of the book, where God still continues to be the theme, but from this point he is unfolded as the God of *love*, and the believers are "children" to him and "brethren" to one another. The privileges, characteristics, duties, trials, and destiny of those who are elevated to this holy fellowship are made known.

Let us call to remembrance what we have already seen of our relation to the Living One who was "from the beginning" through the Revealer and the Advocate. Because of his incarnation he was the Revealer of God, and because of the propitiation he is the Advocate. This propitiation was for the *sins* of believers and for the *sin* of the world. Confession, on our part, of a participation in the revelation made and in the grace given, carried with it certain obligations.

We should instantly obey the One who was revealed; we should "walk as he walked" who made the revelation; we should love the brotherhood as an evidence of being in the light.

At this point our relation to God as our Father, and to the world as his enemy, was introduced. In the mind of our author the whole body of believers was considered as "children"; but before God, some of them had the ripened experience of age, while others had the conquering power of youth. But all are commanded not to love the world which did not arise out of the Father's ordering, and which must ultimately pass away. The time of this dissolution was near, for there were already many "antichrists" going out from the churches, showing the very marks of the *coming* Antichrist, who shall ride into universal dominion on the disclosure of the mystery of iniquity immediately preceding the close of this present dispensation. "The mystery of iniquity" is working secretly now. But toward the end it will be developed out of the midst (ἐκ μέσου γένηται).[1] "*Then* shall be revealed that lawless one."[2] *When* the mysterious system of iniquity comes to the surface, *then*, and not till then, will the Antichrist be revealed and move on to his climax of iniquity.

But the Christ of God will have his revelation from heaven immediately after the Antichrist of Satan, or "man of sin," is revealed on earth. The Antichrist will be revealed out of the earth, and indeed out of the pit, and upon the earth, and all the world will wonder.

[1] Appendix C. [2] 2 Thess. 2 : 5–7.

But when he reaches the height of human wickedness and the depth of Satanic malignity, "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven," and destroy him by the outshining of his presence. The Revealer will make known *greater glories* when seen the second time than when gazed upon at the first. "The *Life*" was manifested (1 : 2) then, but "*He* shall be manifested" in that coming day, and then "shall we also be manifested with him in glory." As the world is waiting for the apocalypse of its coming King, even so we should "come behind in no gift waiting for the apocalypse of the Lord Jesus Christ."

In our relation to the *first* revelation we are now children of God ; but when we consider our relation to the *second* revelation yet to be made from heaven, we are assured that we shall be like the One who is to be revealed. While in the previous chapters we have considered what we have at present in heaven, and what we ought to be and do now on earth, because of a revelation that is past, we are now to be instructed as to what we shall be in the future, and ought to be now, because of a greater revelation yet to burst upon our eyes. In the past the perfect man revealed the unseen God ; in the future the revealed glory of God will transform man into his likeness. We are the children of God now because of what was revealed and done in the past. We shall be like God in that coming day because of what will be revealed and accomplished in the future.

Having considered the light that reveals, the blood

that cleanses, the confession that secures forgiveness on earth, the advocacy that maintains a standing in heaven, the obedience in walk and way that grows out of union, the aversion from the world because of its opposition to our Father, the power to discover antichrists because of our anointing, the nearness of the coming end and of the re-manifestation of Christ, the apostle then links us to the future unfolding of God—not merely of "that which was from the beginning," but of the Father who shall be manifested. He assures us of our standing and hope first before enforcing the duty. It is easier to walk and please God when assured of our relation before we begin the service.

Here we see the children of God in relation to the present and to the future. As to the present, they are his children in title and in reality, although unrecognized by the world. As to the future, the full character of their glory is not made known. We only know that we shall be like God, in Christ, when our Lord is manifested. The practical outcome of this standing and hope is, that we should purify ourselves up to the measure of the purity of Him in whose likeness we shall yet be made perfect. We should strive to be, in present attainment, "pure as he is pure"—we should aim to be *now* what we shall be *then*.

"*Behold what manner of love.*" This love is not simply manifested, but is imparted to us. The love that glows in the heart of God, and is lavished upon his children, is also infused into the children's hearts and becomes the source of a life that is divine.

Now, this gift of love forms the basis and the justification of the divine title given to us. This is the great love—the peculiar manner of love—that ends in making us children, and in giving us the *title* of children of the living God. It is not sons, but children. This term is used, doubtless, to emphasize the two facts, that we are all partakers of the same divine nature and that there is a possibility of *growth* in character and in privilege afterward. Christians have the *standing* of full-grown sons now, according to divine grace, but John does not have that in view. He is always speaking of the life that has been imparted, making them children. This life is not yet fully developed, but there is a promise of maturity and glory. Hence, John never but once uses the term "son," which indicates position and privilege, and that only, when speaking of the inheritance of all things in the new heavens and the new earth, where the growth is complete.[1] Paul speaks of "sons" because he dwells upon our standing through grace, while John uses "children" because of life through spiritual birth.

And they are "called" such—that is, they are outwardly recognized as God's children. This open recognition gives dignity and nobility to the title. If Jesus is "not ashamed to call us brethren" neither is our Father ashamed to acknowledge us as his children.

And now follows a sort of after-thought, "*and such we are.*" We are not only called and recognized, but we *are* the children of God. The title corresponds

[1] Rev. 21 : 7.

to the exact truth. There is no sham, no make-believe about it; we have the name and treatment of children because we are children. We have been born of God and have a birthright place in his family. If

> "Kind hearts are more than coronets,
> And simple faith, than Norman blood,"

far above all is the real life of the real God, giving us the simple faith, kindly heart, and princely standing in the royal family of the God of Light and Love. And then what a prospect is before us! An open recognition in the presence of an assembled universe on that coming day!

This is our present standing before God. But just as we have seen the Christian between light and darkness, between love and hatred, between Christ and antichrists, so now he is spoken of as between God and the world. Before God we are children in title and fact; before the world, unknown. It is because we are children in essence and not merely in name that we are unknown and hated by the world. The reality before God is the cause of the rejection before man. The Christian is a riddle to the world because it cannot understand his spring of action. Knowledge of a person implies oneness of feeling. As men of the world have no fellowship with anything save that which is agreeable to the flesh, attractive to the eye, or flattering to the vanity, they can find no point of attraction in those who are conformed in character to their Heavenly Father.

This is not a new thing in the world. Since the entrance of sin, God has not been recognized by man. God has been revealed in creation,[1] in his goodness,[2] and in the judgments of history,[3] but the world has failed to recognize the revelation. And the failure was more conspicuous when he was manifested in his own Son. After Jesus had revealed the Father during his whole ministry, he wailed out at last, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known *thee*." The servant should not be above the Master. "Whosoever killeth you shall think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you *because* they have not known the Father nor me." The great features of the divine nature were revealed in Christ, but the blinded world knew it not. He was here, in his own world, all unheeded and unappreciated, because he had *in* him another and a different life from that of the first Adam by whose descendants he was surrounded. We must be content to be unknown before men now, for in reverence we can say with the Master, "Our time is not yet." Alford says: "It is the world's ignorance of God, considered as one great act of non-recognition, disobedience, rebellion, and hate, which makes them incapable of recognizing, loving, and sympathizing with those who are veritably children of God."

"*We know that when he shall appear.*" Much needless discussion has been indulged to determine whether it is the glory or the Father or the Son that is

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[1] Rom. 1 : 19, 20. [2] Acts 14 : 17.
[3] Rom. 1 : 32; 1 Cor. 1 : 21.

to be manifested. To say nothing of the weight of the preceding chapter (2 : 28) where Christ is evidently indicated, this much is plain: All through this Epistle John is struggling to say that the inward essence—the very life of God—was revealed in the Son. Indeed, so complete was this revelation that to deny the Son was to deny the Father, and to confess the Son is to have the Father ; *the two are one*. Now, this unseen and eternal God was manifested in the past, and he will be manifested in the future. It was a manifestation "in the likeness of sinful flesh" in the past, and yet a complete manifestation, so far as such a limit could permit of such a revelation. But he will be manifested again in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels and in his own glory, in a day that is near at hand. It is the *next thing* to come from heaven. This is what "shall appear."

By the first manifestation some things were made clear while others were left in the dark.[1] In the manifestation that is yet to come, face will answer to face, light will be shed upon the hidden things of darkness, and we ourselves shall be manifested in glory. In the manifestation of the past it was a veiling in flesh as well as a revealing through man. In the manifestation for which we wait it will be the unveiling and outshining of God as he is. And our great hope is to have disclosed to our eyes the glory of God in Jesus Christ. When on earth he was the "Word," the logical discourse, unfolding the nature of God. When God

[1] John 13 : 7.

appears on the scene again the manifestation will still be God in Christ. But it will not be the effulgence of a glory through the weak body furnished by the Virgin Mary, but through the body of his glory, taken out of the virgin tomb by the power of God. The deity will be as clearly seen then as the humanity was, when he was on earth. We shall be with him and "behold his glory."

"*We shall be like him*," that is, like God in Christ. The image in which we were originally made will reach its predestined end in the likeness of God ; the man created will correspond to the nature and reflect the character of the Creator. It is the Father's manifestation which fills the apostle's mind here ; but it is the Father as seen in the Son. Corresponding to this conception is that of the many children coming to their maturity exactly conformed to this revealing Son. The Father is perfectly revealed in the Son, because he is absolutely like the Father ; and we, the many children, will be perfectly conformed to the Father, because we shall be like the Son, whom we shall see. Knowing our present standing and future hope, we can well afford to be obscure and despised and rejected, like the Master ; we can patiently wait with him for the day of *his* outshining and the day of *our* revealing. If God, the Father, shall get glory in his Son, he will also be admired in the many sons brought to glory with him.

Why like him? Shall we be able to see him as he is because we are like him? or shall we be like him because we see him as he is? Shall our likeness to his

character enable us to see him, or shall the vision change the essence of our character? In other words, will our likeness to him be the condition or consequence of our seeing? It is fair to concede that the verbs used here indicate that the vision of God depends upon our being like him.

Perhaps both are true in a measure. It will be impossible to see God as he is unless we are like him. On the other hand, if we see him his glory will be reflected from us and its likeness will be stamped within us. The gaze of trust and love even now by which we dimly see him "molds us by silent sympathy into the likeness of his wondrous beauty." But when this gaze is "face to face," and when trust and love are heightened to wonder and worship, then the likeness will be complete. The old artists expressed a deep truth in painting John as most like the Lord. He saw most in the Lord because he was most like him, and he became still further transformed by what he saw. Both conceptions are true and scriptural. We can only see clearly through eyes touched by sympathy, and we gain greater power of seeing by a loving contemplation of the object. "The pure in heart shall see God." That is one side of the truth. "We all, with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory," and this is the other side.[1] We see God because we are pure, we are made pure because we reflect, and we can only reflect when we stand before the glory as revealed

[1] Matt. 5 : 8; 2 Cor. 3 : 18.

in the face of Jesus Christ. What we see we will surely show. Within our own eyes the little picture of what they see can always be seen. The heart beholding God in Christ will mirror and manifest the glory which it contemplates.

But the central truth is one and the same, whether we see the vision because we are like the One revealed, or whether we become like him because we see him. Our great confidence is that we shall see the full revelation of God in Christ, and at that time we shall be like the One we see. We shall have a full, direct, and clear knowledge of him. As things are with us now, no man can see God and live. But as they shall be then, "we shall see his face, and his name shall be on our foreheads."[1] The face is the unfolding of the inward character, and that shall be made clear to us then. Our foreheads stand for the revelation of our own nature, and on them will be the Name—that is, the manifested character—of God. Then we shall serve him—do him service—leaving no aspiration of *our* hearts unsatisfied and no desire of *his* heart ungratified.

St. Augustine suggests "that we shall see a sight excelling all the beauties of the earth." Compared with this, the beauty of gold, silver, precious stones, forests, fields, mighty mountains and peaceful glades—the beauty of sun and moon and stars, will be dreary deformity. It will excel all these, for they are beautiful only for and by him whom we shall see. The pen and

[1] Rev. 22 : 4.

tongue have told all they can ; the rest must be pondered and contemplated by an adoring and humbled heart. As the eyes are illuminated by the sun on which they gaze, so shall we be deified by the God whom we shall see. We shall never again know God as our poor and weak powers picture him now, but we shall understand him as he truly is—all Spirit, all Light, all Love.

The hope of becoming yonder like God should make us strive to be like him here. This is the only place in which John speaks definitely of the hope of the Christian, although this aspect of truth is often presented by Peter and Paul. It is not a hope *in* the Christian, but a hope that rests *upon* the Christ. It hangs on him, "every man that hath this hope on him." No Jew ever appeared before the divine presence without first purifying himself according to the Mosaic ritual.[1] John was by birth and education a Jew. His mind grasped the thought of a ritualistic cleansing, and from that, by an easy transition, he turned to the real and personal purification preparatory to a vision of God. It was all the more imperative to be personally purified, because at this manifestation God is to appear in the presence of his people, rather than the people in the presence of God. And the uncertainty of the time made the diligence more startling. "If he shall be manifested," but at what hour we do not know.

Those who have this hope will purify themselves. Some may find it easier to do good than to be good.

[1] John 11 : 55 ; Acts 21 : 24 ; Exod. 19 : 10, 11.

In order to expel sin, some may give themselves up to beneficence rather than to purity ; to doing good rather than to being good. But this Scripture implies both. The one who cherishes this hope, purifies himself, not merely by outward ordinance and a benevolent life, but by inward effort. He keepeth himself pure, disciplines himself so that he may live the farther removed from the impurities of life. By culture he comes to have a delicate sensibility, shrinking from contamination with pollution of any kind. This hope will lead to the cleansing of his heart, imagination, and thoughts. He will make himself pure, "even as Christ is pure," referring doubtless to the divine-human life of Christ. He is pure, and we strive to become like him in purity. It is entire purification, not merely from unchastity, but from all "defilements of flesh and spirit." The wellspring of grace is in Christ and its fullness is poured into the heart of the believer. This enables us to become pure "as he is pure," to approach his purity in kind but not in degree. By the blood of atonement we are now free from the pollution of sin. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, up to the measure of our faith, we are also delivered from the power, habit, and preference of sin, but not from its presence. That final blessing, that climax of attainment, will be ours when he comes again. The hope of what we shall be then leads us to reach out toward that end now.

How shall we attain this purity? First, by opposing the very beginnings of sin, by keeping the heart clean. Secondly, by contemplating that manifestation

of God which we have seen in Jesus Christ. In other words, by a loving and sympathetic study of Christ in his moral glory. It is by trusting and feeding upon Christ that we grow. We get life by looking, and likeness by continuing to look; life by trusting, and likeness by feeding. It is better that love draw us than that duty drive us. Thirdly, by having an eye on this day of coming manifestation. It is not every one that hath a hope, but every one "that hath *this* hope, purifieth himself." This hope kindles our aspirations, quickens our energies, ennobles our motives, and molds our present purposes. Christ has determined to come again and make us like himself. A knowledge of this manner of love, and a hope based upon this promise, become a power in our lives. Fourthly, by recognizing and relying upon the Holy Spirit, now dwelling in our bodies. He is the power of God, ever present to help and to keep. This power becomes our own as we appropriate it, count upon it, and use it.

When this glory comes to the whole of the redeemed race, the final purpose of creation will have been reached, the "one far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves." God became man that he might be introduced to the race. He was made like unto us that we might be made like unto him. Greek theologians were bold in saying, "God was humanized that man might be deified." Not that we become partakers of his essence, but we become like him in our character. The great end that God had in view, when

he made man in his image, male and female, will then be realized. It will come in a higher sense than could have been possible if sin had not entered into the world. Man will then be the perfect image of God, male and female, yet one. The new man will be Christ, the head and bridegroom, and the church, the body and bride, absolutely like God, in Christ, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

CHAPTER IX

SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

1 John 3 : 4–12

We have had the children, as a family, at home with their Father, in the first and second chapters. This was in view of a *past* revelation of God leading to a participation in his nature. We are now to look at this same family in its life and associations down here upon the earth, but in daily expectation of a more glorious revelation of God in the *future*. Before the relationship to each other and to the world is unfolded, the apostle shows what this family is to God here and now, and to what glory he will exalt it by and by. It is grace first, truth afterward.

As we have seen, this family now partakes of the divine nature, and its members are children of God, in title and in reality. But, in their relation to the world they are not recognized, even as their Master was not recognized. As to the future, we are not told what the exact character of their glory will be ; that is not revealed. We only know that we shall be like God in Christ when he is manifested. The world does not know who we are now, and we do not know what we shall be hereafter.

The practical outcome of faith in the past manifesta-

tion of God, and of hope respecting the future, is that we should purify ourselves up to the measure of him in whose likeness we shall yet be manifested. We should strive to be now, in present attainment, pure like the One into whose very image we shall be transformed then.

In our present study, the connection is with "*purifieth himself.*" The opposite of making one's self pure is indulging in sin. "He that doeth sin" represents the actual realization of sin as something which is definitely brought about in the life. The man who does bring about sin also commits lawlessness. That is, he that doeth sin, or misseth the mark (as the word means), or acts so that his life misses the mark, this man is committing lawlessness. He disregards the law, and conducts himself as if there were no law. It is something deeper than transgressing the law, as translated by the old version. That "transgression" conveyed the idea of an outward law that was crossed, but John's conception here is more searching. Sin was in the world from Adam to Moses before the law was given, and therefore before it could be transgressed.[1] The nature of man is lawless, and every expression of that nature is sin, even before a law is violated.

The man who realizes sin in act manifests the assertion of a selfish will against a paramount authority. Law is applied to our personal being, as well as to our relations to man, to things without, and to God. The

[1] Rom. 5 : 12.

law of Moses took notice of man's dealing with himself, with other men, with animals, with harvests, and also of his duty to God. Any violation of any of these laws, as to self, as to our fellow-creatures, as to property, or as to God, is sin, or a missing of the mark. The origin of sin is selfishness. When, therefore, any one acts as if he had no superior, his own will becomes his ruler, and *there* is lawlessness, for in such a case there is no respect to any rule outside of self. The Christian especially should ever have his eye directed upward to his Lord, and not inward to his own will. He knows and believes in the love of God, and should therefore permit God to choose his path and direct his steps. He has nothing to fear but everything to gain from obedience to the will of God. To refuse to be guided thus by the will and word of God is the widest missing of the true mark possible to man.

Again, sin in the Christian sets at naught the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. His whole manifestation, from his birth to his ascension, contributed to the putting away of sin. By one act of obedience, ending in death on the cross, he took away our sins once and forever. Being the sinless one, he was fitted to take upon himself the task of removing sin. Accordingly, his mission will not reach its end and aim until we are personally kept from a continuance in sinful acts.

Having no sin in him explains both how he could put away sin, and also how sin in *us* is inconsistent with fellowship with *him*. Hence the necessity of the blood to cleanse, even while walking in the light. He was

absolutely spotless in his character, and partnership with him implies a departure from the practice of sin. "*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*"—is not a doer of sin. It is inconsistent to say that we can abide in a *sinless* Christ and yet proceed in a *sinful* course. To the full extent of our abiding in Christ shall we be kept from the practice of sin. The sinless life of Christ, and the sinful life of the believer exclude each other. Abiding in him implies sinning not, just as walking in the light implies hating not. This describes a prevailing characteristic of the believer, and does not refer to an exceptional act. There may be sinful acts, but there cannot be a sinful character while abiding in the sinless One—the prevailing *habit* is not that of a sinning one.

On the other hand, the perpetual doing of sin precludes the reality of a professed knowledge of Christ. Every one who *habitually sins* (for that is the force of the present tense here), shows by that conduct that he has neither seen nor known the Lord. This seems to be directed against some false teachers who had seen the Lord in the flesh. They saw his body, but they never perceived nor understood *him*. It is that personal knowledge of him in his fullness, meeting the depth and variety of our need, that the doer of sin knows nothing about.

John again assumes his paternal familiarity, "*Little children, let no man lead you astray.*" The tenderness of the address grows out of the peril which John saw in the situation. Professing to have a knowledge of

God, and yet to persist in the practice of sin, was abhorrent to the apostle and hazardous to the disciple.

"*He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*" This is startling, indeed, to be put on a plane by the side of God. But John uses this same language seven times in his writings, and it occurs nowhere else. "They are not of the world even as" Christ is not of the world; he has given us an example that we should "do as he has done"; we are "to love one another as" he hath loved us; we are under obligation "to walk as he walked"; having hope, we should purify "ourselves as he is pure"; and we are assured that "as he is, so are we in this world." Wonderful grace from God is this, but solemn responsibility to us! To be a habitual doer of righteousness, in its rounded completeness, is to manifest a righteous character, as God in Christ is righteous. The life in us is the same as it is in him. This is the root of the personal character which underlies the outward deeds, just as the nature of the tree exists beneath its fruit. The one life in Christ produced the one fruit of obedient love; and when that life is begotten in us, its fruit will be no different in character than when seen in him. It is "the *fruit* of the Spirit," but never do the Scriptures speak of fruits, either in him or in us.

Then follows one of those many contrasts seen in this Epistle. Just as the doing of righteousness shows our connection with Christ, so the doing of sin shows our connection with the devil. Sin is lawlessness, but the doer of sin is of the devil. And this corresponds with

the words of our Lord: "Ye are of your father, the devil, and his works ye do," "ye are from beneath," "ye are of this world."

Here we are face to face with the *roots* of things. Paul, in tracing sin, goes back to Adam,[1] but John goes back to the one who instilled his lies into Adam's heart and made him what he became. Sin is thus traced back to its personal source, but we have no hint as to how or why sin originated in that person. We only know that the devil fashioned, but did not create the world of mankind that began in disobedience; and we also know that the one who continues in the doing of sin, draws the ruling principle of his life from him. Whatever "beginning"[2] may be intended, it is absolutely certain that this great adversary has been sinning ever since the creation of man. And so from the beginning of human society, from the commencement of the world of man, the devil has been engaged in one long-continued act of sin. To be a doer of sin is, therefore, to be in league with this adversary of God. The outward conduct shows the inward spring of life.

Now "*the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.*" If any professed follower of Christ is a doer of sin, it is evident that in his case the work of Christ has not yet been accomplished. This is the first instance in which Jesus is called the Son of God in our Epistle. From this point the

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[1] Rom. 5 : 14.

[2] The word translated "murderer" in John 8 : 44 is man-killer in the original. This limits "beginning" to human history.

higher title is commonly used.[1] The second Adam could answer the first Adam, but it required the Son of God to meet and master the master of Adam. In Scripture and in history Satan and the Son of God are always brought into personal antagonism : Satan is a liar, Christ is the truth ; Satan a murderer, Christ the life-giver ; Satan the prince of darkness, Christ the Light of the world ; Satan is the god of this age, Christ is the ruler of the age to come.

When the question of sins, growing out of the lawlessness within us, is considered, John says that Jesus "*was manifested to take away sins.*" This was an act accomplished once for all upon the cross. But now man is looked upon as linked to the devil—organically united to the world he has formed and also engaged in the practice of sin. Here, evidently, something more than the *guilt* of sin is under consideration. Accordingly "the Son of God was manifested to destroy." This word means to dissolve, to untie, to unloose "the works of the devil."[2]

Christ has been manifested to put away the guilt of sin as a Saviour between God and man. This was the God-ward side of his work. But man is under the delusion of Satan ; his mind and heart are all tied up and tangled in falsehoods. He is in Satan's kingdom, well organized, but it is the organism of death. Nothing short of the manifestation of the Son of God can dissolve this closely jointed kingdom of darkness.

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[1] 4 : 15 ; 5 : 5, 20.

[2] Acts 27 · 41 ; Eph. 2 : 14 ; 2 Peter 3 : 10–12.

What are these works of the devil? To understand this question will help us to see how God, manifested in the flesh, dissolves them. It is evident that we need not go to criminal courts or to the criminal classes to find them. They are in the palaces of princes as well as in the cottages of peasants—in the homes of the rich as well as in the hovels of the poor. The fact is, Satan came into the Garden of Eden and succeeded in putting his toils about our first parents, and the whole race is entangled still. He ensnared them in a lie and they fell. Carlyle says, "a lie always ends in a broken head for some one before it reaches its journey's end." It was so here. No one knows to what glory man might have attained had he not been tripped by the wiles of the devil. We only know the sad results of the fall, and the grace that meets its ruin. In the fourteenth Psalm we see the picture drawn by a divine artist. Man begins with "no God" and descends through a terrible catalogue of sins until he ends with no one willing "to seek after God and none that doeth good." This is the picture of the man Adam. He began by setting God aside to accept the leadership of another. He did not want God then, and men do not want him now. It was separation from God in the beginning, and it terminated in union with the devil in the end.

The great difficulty is to bring men back to God, and this was the stupendous work undertaken by Christ. Man was turned away from God, but from the beginning Jesus was face to face with God (*πρὸς τὸν θεὸν—pros ton*

theon).[1] He came into the world with a heart still loyal to the Father, and, because loyal, turned in love toward men. He came to express the love of God to man, to contradict the lie of the evil one, and thus to undo and dissolve his works. He came to take man out from under the thraldom of the devils' yoke, and to bring him under the power of God's liberating truth. He came to take him out of a false world and to put him into the true and real world. Hence to know the truth is to be made free.

The first great need was to remove man's false notions of God. Eve was deluded to believe that God was ungracious and did not love her, and hence the exclusion from *one* of the trees in the garden. She was also persuaded that disobedience was a trifle and that she might eat of the forbidden fruit and yet live. The coming of Christ revealed the fervent love and the spotless holiness of God. He was himself, in life and in death, the expression of the love glowing in the Father's heart. His work and his words were a testimony to man to remove the slander on God's character which was thrust upon man in Eden, and which is still throwing its pall over the world. It is the basis of all heathen worship to-day. These poor, devil-ridden people believe God to be a hateful and hating being—a monster to be appeased. Its basest form is the devil worship which has recently come from the "habitations of cruelty," and is now established in Paris, the center of modern civilization. It is at the basis of the falsehood running

[1] John 1 : 1.

all through the Roman Catholic Church. The God of this church is so unloving and hard of heart that he can only be reached by a species of *diplomacy*. If one can go to the Virgin Mary, she will intercede with her Son, and the Son with his Father, and thus the unfeeling tyrant may be persuaded into acts of mercy contrary to his wish or way. Horrible travesty of infinite love!

But the life and death of Christ also testify that God is light, that in him there is nothing wrong and he can tolerate nothing wrong in others. His law cannot be violated with impunity, and an inward character that is out of harmony with his holiness contains in itself the source of its own condemnation and destruction. When Jesus became "sin for us" although he personally "knew no sin," when it "pleased Jehovah to bruise him and to make his soul an offering for sin," and when by our redemption he became "a curse for us" *then* it became plain to the world of men and to the universe of God that disobedience is no trifle, that only "fools make a mock at sin," and that every one who eats of that which is forbidden he "*shall surely die.*"

Thus Jesus testifies that God is love and is light—absolutely holy—and he can suffer no wrong to go unwhipped of its reward. By this testimony he wakens man to a sense of his guilt and danger and also to a knowledge of the way to return to God in the simplest confidence. The entanglement and ruin of the race *began* in wrong thoughts about God and about disobedience to his commands. The deliverance and restora-

tion must begin at the same point. The devil's lie was the source of the ruin ; the true revelation of the true God is the source of the remedy.

Moreover, he testifies *to God* of what men may become, by being the Head of the new race as well as "the express image" of God. Jesus Christ was the second Adam, the second Head of the race, and every man who receives him as Saviour will ultimately become as he is now. *God* sees what man will yet become, and *man* sees what God was and is, and will be forever, in Jesus Christ. More than this, Jesus being the Mediator between God and man, and being absolutely holy, he provided a *channel* for the unhindered flow of the boundless love of God to man. Accordingly, man is delivered from the delusion about God, and believes in a God of absolute holiness and infinite love ; and believing, trusts, loves, and adores. So that in him the works of the devil are destroyed.

Then to complete this undoing of the works of the devil, when we are led to believe in this unfolding of God and to trust the One through whom it was made, the Holy Spirit imparts the divine life to us and illuminates the whole inner world of our being. The life which he begets by the word of God he remains to feed and nourish. He supplies our inner man with a strength corresponding to that by which Christ was raised from the dead. We are thus delivered from the delusions of the devil about the character of God, from the choice of evil in our hearts, from its power and practice in our lives. We are "delivered out of the power of

darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love."[1]

This opens the way to understand the ninth verse. "*Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin*," or perhaps a better rendering would be, is not a *doer* of sin, "because his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin (be sinning) because he is begotten of God." This gives the force of the Greek here, and removes many difficulties. Every believer is created a new man, and by this means he gets the fulfillment of the new covenant, "I will write my laws upon their hearts." All the desires, impulses, and tendencies of this new man are perfect, according to the perfection of God. This is the result of the new birth through the life-giving Christ. "His seed" is the word by which the new life is begotten. It is dropped into the soul of man, and taken up by divine power and developed into conduct. It remains as the abiding power, precluding the practice of sin. One who is thus renewed and illuminated by the Holy Spirit—who, being begotten, has his birth from God abiding in him—will not, cannot, continue in the path and practice of sin. It is *continuance in sin*, and not the *act* of sin, that is under consideration here. Whosoever is born of God does not habitually sin—he cannot be constantly and characteristically sinning.

It is barely possible that "*his seed abideth in him*" refers to the fact that God's children are here called

[1] It is probable that the apostle had also in view the resurrection of the dead and the creation of all things new, as the result of the work of the Son of God.—Rev. 21 : 1-8.

"his seed" who abide in God and therefore do not practise sin. Abiding in God and sinning are contradictory terms. This thought is in harmony with John's teaching elsewhere, although the other sense is more natural and commends itself to acceptance.

We have a fixed condition given to us in the heavens in Christ, and we also have planted in us fixed habits of thought, feeling, and action on earth, so that we may become radically different from all who know not God. There is not a moral characteristic that may finally attach to us in heaven, of which the *germ* is not found in us now, by virtue of the new man. The opposite is equally true. The *seed* of every evil that may be seen among men now, or that may be unfolded hereafter, is already in our flesh. Indeed, it is a grave question whether we have not by nature, in *germinal form*, every evil that may be fully developed in Satan himself.

Hence the different relation of believers and unbelievers to evil and to good is essential, inherent, and abiding. He that is a doer of sin is of the devil, but every one that is begotten of God is not a doer of sin. He may commit acts of sin, but he will not habitually continue sinning. The man who characteristically sins shows that he is not of God, but receives his inspiration from the devil. The man who is born of God, on the other hand, will not be a perpetual doer of evil. The apostle does not say that the believer never sins. He says the contrary in the first chapter, and has made known the source of security to the believer in spite of sin, by virtue of the blood and the person of our ador-

able Lord. Here he means to insist that no believer habitually continues in the path of sin. And this testimony is true.

It will thus be seen that God gives *himself* to us. He does not merely work upon us as a sculptor, on a statue. He works in us, imparts his own life, called the new man, and this life finally matures under his guiding hand. On account of this, the manifestation of the children of God from the children of the devil becomes natural and necessary. Every one that is not a doer of righteousness and that loveth not his brother is not of God. The child of God is not merely a passive being doing ill to no one, but a righteous and loving man doing right and good to all men.

He must do the things that are right, and he must acknowledge the ties established by Christ. In other words, he must acknowledge the laws of the original creation of man, and also the laws of redemption. These laws are righteousness and love. Righteousness belonged originally to creation. Love flows out of redemption. Righteousness is the fulfillment of the law toward God and toward man on earth. But the love of the Christian for the Christian grows out of the sense of divine fellowship brought in by the redemption of Christ. It is a love of brother for brother, within the limits of those who are begotten of God. Hence, he who does not love his brother has, strictly speaking, no brother in the Christian family to love. He is himself outside of the Christian family.

Now, the whole aim of the message—that which was

received from the Word of life which John saw, gazed upon, and handled—is, that we may love one another. The whole aim of that which was revealed by Christ, in life and in death, is to save men from selfishness, and to lead them to self-sacrifice—in other words, to awaken in them love one for another. The message is light, its fruit is love. Had sin never entered into the world,—had man never needed grace,—then righteousness would have been the mold in which the life of man had run. But the introduction of sin made grace a necessity. This grace was the channel for the outflow of divine love. Love coming to us, saving us, and putting us before God on a new foundation, places upon us the obligation of having our whole conduct based upon love, and love exceeds righteousness always.

This message of mercy was the light of the race at its fountain head. Cain, who "was of the evil one," showed his connection with the devil by his hatred of righteousness, and want of love for his brother. Just as God is the fountain out of which righteousness and love come, so the devil is the fountain out of which sin and hatred flow. Cain hated righteousness in his own brother. He was to Abel what the world was to Jesus —"That upon this generation may come all the righteous blood from the blood of Abel." The sons of the evil one are "hateful, and hate one another." It was the contrast that Cain saw between himself and his brother that moved his anger, culminating in his fearful crime. It was not because Cain was bloodthirsty or passionate that he became a murderer; but because his

own "works were evil and his brother's righteous." You grant a consciousness of wrong-doing and a stubborn heart; let light come in to quicken the conscience, while still leaving a proud and hardened heart, and you will have the beginnings of another scene of hatred that may end in violence.

And this may rise up even among professed Christians. If you know of a single child of God who irritates you with his presence, because of his holiness of life, danger is near. Ahab tolerated four hundred false prophets, but there was one, Micaiah, of whom he said: "I hate him, for he doth prophesy evil concerning me." It is the rebuke administered to our shortcomings, whether tacit or spoken, that inspires hatred. To awaken to a consciousness of something wrong in us because of the light of a holy life moving near us, will irritate a perverse nature to the point of hatred, and *there* is the beginning of another Cain. Let us beware.

CHAPTER X

LOVE AND HATRED

1 John 3 : 13–18 In our last chapter we saw the two families which live upon the earth—the one "born of God" and the other "of the devil." These two families are set forth at the very beginning of human history by Cain and Abel. Cain, the first-born, represented the flesh, and was of the evil one, while Abel, the second-born, represented the Spirit, and was of God. In the Scriptures first things are generally set aside and the second, elected to honor—that which is natural comes first, afterward that which is spiritual. It was so here.

We saw also that faith, leading to the practice of righteousness and love, is the essential mark of the family of God. These qualities are met by unbelief, sinning, and hatred, as the characteristics of the family of the devil.

Now this hatred becomes a grim fact, to be faced by those who possess life in Christ and are filled with love. Those who remain in spiritual death show the nature of their death by the destructiveness of their conduct. The terrible action of Cain in murdering his brother out of envy, is repeated in the world to-day.

In the first verse of this chapter, we are assured that

we are the children of God, even if the world does not come to understand that fact. Here the apostle goes farther and exhorts us not to be filled with wonder, even if the world hate us. We know intuitively that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. The fact of brotherly love is the evidence of dwelling in the sphere of life. So we need not be disturbed by any lack of recognition of our standing in the family of God, on the part of those who belong to the family of death and darkness, nor need we marvel if they hate us.

In the thirteenth verse we see the introduction of the term "brethren," and it is new. It is a word that is constantly used by Paul, but it never appears again in our Epistle. It stands for the thought of Christian equality, because of a common life, just as "children" indicates spiritual dependence and the promise of growth, and "little ones" indicates subordination and immaturity. And this is the thought so constantly before the mind of John.

The consciousness of love for Christians as Christians and *because* they are Christians, is proof to us that we have entered upon the new life. In fact, it shows that we are now in possession of the new life. The passage from death to life is made, and this new emotion of love is proof of the existence of life in the heart and also of our translation out of the region of death into the kingdom of life. Love is the sign and not the instrument of our passage from the one sphere to the other.

Men live either in the sphere of death which is truly death, or in the sphere of life which is truly life. Those who are once born are still in the sphere of death, although they have natural life. Those who are twice born, or born from above as well as from beneath, move in the sphere of spiritual life. To be in the sphere of death is to be separated from God and alienated from men. Death, in its last analysis, means separation, and spiritual death is separation from both God and man. To be in the sphere of life is to be united with God and to love the brethren. Life, in its last analysis, is organic union, and spiritual life is union with God and man. He that loveth not—that is, he who is not habitually and characteristically loving—abides in death. He abides in that death which is separation from God and man. It must be so, because the essence of the divine life is love. Life and love seem to the mind of John to be convertible terms.

John speaks of the hatred of the world, which is to be expected. It is the normal condition of our world to hate. He also says that hatred may sometimes find a place among the professed brethren. There will be Cains coming to worship among the new family, born from above. Such hatred among professed believers is not only a mark of having their root in death, but also a mark that they have the seed of murder in their hearts. It is a state of death and separation from God and therefore of separation from man. Hatred involves the destruction of the life of love in self and also, the brethren who possess that life. A hater has al-

ready destroyed *love* in his own heart, and he may also destroy the one in whose heart love is seen.

But, immediately after communion with God is established, love flows out toward the brethren. This communion is life, and life organizes itself into union with both God and man. The one who hates cuts himself off from God and also from the universe. Hatred is murder in the heart. Just as the ten commandments are opposed to the *act* of murder in the conduct, so the revelation of the gospel is opposed to the *principle* of murder in the heart. The law pronounces vengeance on the crime of the murderer's hand; the life manifested in Christ is opposed to hatred in the heart, which produces murder in the act. The commandments reach the conduct, but the life and the gospel came from the heart of God and reach the heart of man. Thus the gospel of the grace of God supersedes the law, just as the light of the sun supersedes the light of the stars, by virtue of its surpassing glory. The law touches the act, the gospel goes to the heart; the law came from the lips of God, but the life and love of the gospel come from his heart; the one was written by his finger on tables of stone, and the other on "fleshy tables of the heart."

Now we know intuitively that if any one is a hater, no eternal life dwelleth in him. Here the present tense occurs with its usual force; it means every one who *habitually* hates his brethren. Heretofore the believer has been represented in this Epistle as having the word, the seed, and the love of God abiding in him. He is

also represented as having an unction, the truth, and even God and Christ abiding in him. But here John speaks of eternal life abiding in the believer. We know that if there is life abiding in us it will show itself in growth and action. The action of this life from God, reaching out to the age of the ages yet to come, is an action of love. If this life is in us, the action of love will proceed from us. It is because of this that we come to know that no *hater* has life in him. If the climax of hatred, murder, be present, it is utterly impossible that this germ of life can exist at the same time.

But how do we know that we love? After what pattern must our love show itself? We know that we love because God has taught us what love is. It is an act the exact opposite of the murderer's characteristic act of hatred. It is the sacrifice of self for the good of others and not the sacrifice of others for the real or supposed good of self. "*Herein*," John says, "*we come to know love, because he* [Christ] *laid down his life for us.*" He laid down his life in our behalf, over us, and in our stead. This is the divine definition and explanation of love—a definition given in action and not in word. It is to be borne in mind that the words, "of God" are not in the text; hence we learn, not merely what the love of God is, but what *love* in abstract and essence is. We learn what love is, at the cross, just as we learn at the cross, and can learn nowhere else, what sin is in its deepest and most polluted nature. The cross is the measure of everything. This ideal of love gives rise to

the loftiest moral and spiritual emotions. Its archetype is in the bosom of God; its home among men is Christ's heart of fire and flesh; and its example is the incarnation ending at the cross. That is what love is, and this is the way we come to know it.

At this point we have reached the very center around which this whole Epistle revolves. The foundation of everything is the life of God manifested in the wonderful work of his Son. Now the root by which we become attached to God through his Son is faith. Of this Epistle, then, it may be said that its theme is a manifested God, its root is faith, its life is love, its law is truth, its fruit is holiness, and its note is everlasting fellowship with God and with the brethren.

This is the pattern for us. Christ was a perfect manifestation of the divine life of love that existed in the bosom of God, unseen by the eyes of men. When that life is communicated to us, it should lead to results like those seen in the life of our Lord. Hence our relation to Christ and to his followers is such that we should lay down our lives in self-sacrifice for the brethren. Both the example of Christ and the truth revealed by his example constrain us, while we are moved mightily by the divine life formed within. That is to say, our love is all of a piece with "*the love*," the one great love that existed from all eternity and was manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a *vital* union with Christ. This life in us should repeat itself in a manner similar to what was seen in him. This was the language of John's life as well as of his lips and of his pen. Hence

the pattern for us, whether in righteousness or in love, is *divine*. God is light, and we should walk in the light. God is absolutely righteous, and we should walk in the righteousness of that holy God. He is also love, and that love is the mold of our lives. Divine righteousness and divine love are the patterns of our conduct. We are lifted up beyond the mere "shalt nots" of Moses to the great "ought" that flows from the heart of God in light and love.

The great commandments of Moses, as summed up by Christ, are to love God with all the heart and our neighbor as ourselves. But these two commandments only embodied the Jewish sense of right and justice. The new command is made known by the example of the giver—it is embodied in a person and not declared by words. He laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another even as I have loved you." Jesus loved the world *as* he loved himself. He emptied himself that we might be filled, and beggared himself that we might be enriched. This is *the pattern* of life now set before us for our reproduction and manifestation. It was seen in the Apostles and early Christians. It is illustrated by hundreds of missionaries, mothers, and obscure workers to-day, who follow the self-emptying path of Christ.[1] No, it is not the Ten Commandments. They only stand in our way when we turn our feet into *wrong* paths. But the pattern of Jesus lures us on to nobler deeds, when

[1] Phil. 2 : 5–8

we turn our hearts toward *right* paths and toward the suffering brother. When John, the author of this Epistle, was asked why he always repeated in the church, "little children, love one another," he replied: "Because it is the commandment of the Lord, and if this one thing be attained, it is enough." And so, over and over again, the injunction was given, and has come down to us through the centuries, laden with the life of our Lord and made sacred by "that disciple whom Jesus loved."

But it is possible for man to mistake the *emotions* of heroic and divine sentiments for the *deed* of love. In such a case we are apt to forget the commonplace duties of looking up the brethren, finding out their need, and helping them. Hence John proceeds to put this love to a practical test, to bring it down from the skies to the earth—down from the head to the feet of the body. He says, "he that hath the life of this world," or as it is put in the translation, "this world's goods, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion," so that a brother can find no access to his sympathy,—that is, he who puts up a bar so that a needy brother can find no access to his tender feelings,—this man has not the love of God in him. "Shutteth up," implies that he deliberately closes his heart after it has been touched by the first sight of suffering. It is not merely a readiness to talk, to weep, and to go into raptures about the divine nature of sympathy. It is a willingness, when a needy brother's case is brought before our notice, to look into it and to help him. The man who refuses to supply either food or clothing shows a lack in his heart

of that life of love. There is many a man who thinks he would die for the Lord, but who would not feed or clothe a suffering brother. This is the ordinary and homely test of love that comes to every man's life. Few are called upon to die for another, but all have the chance to deny self for another's good. If we are found wanting here we need ask for no other test.

Hence John says, "*how doth the love of God abide in him?*" The phrase, "the love of God," is peculiar. It means the love of which God is both the *author* and the *object*, and it should never be forgotten that he is also its *example*. Here we are blamed, not for *transgressing the law* of God, but we are blamed for not *expressing the love* of God. We are, therefore, to blame for not letting the love that glows in the heart of God express itself through the beneficence of our lives. If we have faith, that gives *Christ to us;* but love, flowing from faith, gives *us* to our *brother*.

Then follows the exhortation not to practise the hypocrisy of love—love in words and not in deeds, in tongue and not in truth. As this is God's love expressed toward us, begotten in us, and manifested through us, there need be no drying up of its stream, leaving only a sediment of word-love and tongue-love. A profession of love never clothed the naked nor fed the hungry. One of the greatest blessings and one of the highest honors that can ever come to man is to be a channel for God's love, flowing out to our fellow creatures. When God can express his own love through a human heart, a human touch, a human look, and a

human gift, it is most divine. This love of God goes out from a believing soul and leads to a devout heart and a helping hand. Thus shall we attain to a perfect *balance* of belief, feeling, communion, and work, all of which are necessary to a full and rounded Christian character.

CHAPTER XI

OBEDIENCE AND CONFIDENCE

1 John 3 : 19–24 By common consent, the nineteenth and twentieth verses here are the hardest to interpret of any part of this difficult Epistle. It would only be a source of confusion to state the various ways in which they have been explained. Our usual course will be followed. We shall unfold that teaching that seems to be according to the mind of the author and of the Holy Spirit by whom he was moved, without giving attention to anything doubtful. The Revised version is adopted. It is, almost word for word, the same as that made by Canon Westcott.

"Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our heart before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

We have here, without doubt, the intimate relation existing between a believing heart and a loving God. In the preceding verses we have seen the intimacy that ought to exist between the sons of God, and the hatred that will surely come from the world. Just as God's children ought to manifest a perfect willingness to *share* everything among themselves, so there ought to be undisturbed confidence that God is willing to *share*

everything with his children. In a former chapter we were told to abide in Christ that we might not be shamed away from his presence when he appears a second time. But here we are looked upon as walking before God now, and a present confidence becomes exceedingly practical in everyday life.

We shall come to know that we are of the truth. We are of God as the source of our spiritual life, but "of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." The truth is the instrument for begetting the life in us. Jesus is himself the truth, revealing the right relationship of man to God and also, to his fellow-man. When Christ and his teachings are received in the heart, then we become children of the truth. To be a child of God points specially to the divine life received; while to be a child of the truth, has in view the *practical manifestation* of the life within us, in its relation to God, to the believer, and to the world. When the spirit of Christ is manifested in our lives—when we love in deed and in truth, then only do we come to know that we are of the truth. What is more, we persuade our hearts before God in any matter in which *our hearts condemn us.* Our hearts are to live before *him* now, no matter where our abiding place may be on earth. It is the essential feature of the Christian life—that it be lived out, in thought and deed, in the very presence of God.

This thought of being before the eye of God is the key to the meaning here. It is a companion to the Epistle to the Hebrews.[1] In the latter, the believer is

[1] Heb. 4 : 12-16.

searched by "the word of God" until soul and spirit, joints and marrow, thoughts and intents of the heart are all laid bare. "All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." But we can "draw near with boldness to the throne of grace," in spite of the awful discoveries made by the searching "word," because we have "in heaven a great high priest, Jesus the Son of God," "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." This is our relation to God in his temple, under the mediation of our "high priest," so that we have confidence, boldness to come for mercy to forgive, and grace to help.

In John, however, the Revealer and the Revealed are one and the same person. We are brought face to face with God, not so much because of the Mediator bringing us to God as because of God coming to us and imparting his own life. We have, therefore, to deal with God *directly*. Now when we do not live up to our light, and the condemnation of our hearts overwhelms us, must our fellowship be broken? Are we cut off from confidence? By no means. In whatsoever particular our hearts may condemn, we may still persuade them to confidence, because "*God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.*" *Because greater*, he would find greater reason to condemn when looking at *us*. That is true. But *because greater*, he would have the greater reason to love and bless when looking at "all things" which his *grace* has provided in our behalf—the propitiation, the cleansing blood, and the Advocate maintaining our standing. From the be-

ginning God knew all we might need of mercy, both before and after *he* came into our hearts and *we* came into his family; and the provision of grace was equal to the untold need. Whatever the heart might bring up to condemn, we could still fall back upon the knowledge of God extending *beyond* all *we* might know, including much more than those things on which the heart dwells. His grace, which made provision for depths and heights of guilt beyond our ken, would not stumble over the difficulties of what might come under our knowledge. For, be it ever remembered that the question of our salvation as sinners is not under consideration here, it is the problem of maintaining confidence as stumbling and falling saints. When we love the brethren in deed, so that there can be no doubt about its reality, then we know that God's love has been bestowed upon us, his life has been imparted to us, and his presence is among us—we are before him. He who gave us all these things is greater than our hearts and gracious to forgive, not only all the failures upon which the heart sorrowfully dwells, but all the greater failures that a knowledge of all things implies. Hence we assure our hearts; but this assurance does not lay claim to sinlessness, nor does it lead to insensibility to the heinousness of sin, but it leads to a tender assurance in the very presence of a heart-searching and holy God, because of all that he is known to be.

We persuade ourselves into *confidence before God*, notwithstanding our *failings before man*. Our whole life, our essential being, is before God. It is before

him that we may have confidence toward him. "O Thou, that art in the cleft of the rock, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice." The prodigal needed not only to return to the Father's farm, and house, and table, but to the Father's face and heart. There is where we are now; it is not what we hope for. But we take it by faith, and walk softly before him who is above us, beneath us, behind us, before us, with us, and in us.

But if our heart condemn us not, then it follows that we have absolute boldness before God. We do not need, in this case, to struggle and drag ourselves out of conscious failures that we may lift ourselves up to the face and favor of God. We are in that favor already, and we enjoy the consciousness of its peace. And this leads to freedom of speech in making known our wants. And "*whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.*" Our prayer is not answered as a *reward* of obedience, but we have the assurance of an answer to our prayers *because* of obedience. *We* do not give God so much service on condition that *he* may give us back so much answer to prayer. The answer comes because the prayer, in its deepest meaning, coincides with the commandments and will of God. The sole and only end of the Christian is to keep the commandments and to do the will of God. The sole and only end of his prayer, the thing that he aims at in his prayer, is power to enable him to keep those commandments and to do that will. Therefore, whatsoever we

ask is necessarily answered, because we are now doing what is pleasing to God and we are watchfully looking to the future, that we may discern his will as we move on in the path of life. For this reason everything that we ask of him is granted to us with gracious generosity.

When walking before God in confidence, the heart will respond to the blessed influence flowing from his glorious nature. The heart is formed by the communion which we enjoy in the light of his countenance. God, *when* we are in his presence and fellowship, animates the life which he has imparted, attracts the heart which he has created, and molds the will which he has given us. We are thus led to pray for the fulfillment of those desires which are begotten in us and which come to us when we are overshadowed by his presence. God freely gives the power of his Spirit and providence to bring to pass longings that find their source in himself. This was the position and experience of our Lord when acting for the Father among men on earth. He who could say, "I do always the things that are pleasing to him," also said, "I knew that thou hearest me always."[1]

After this follows a statement concerning the commandments of God. Here we find one of the most concise summaries of all that God requires of us during this present age that can be found in the whole of the Scriptures. John puts the Christian where he truly belongs. There is nothing plainer in the Scriptures

[1] John 8 : 29 ; 11 : 42.

than that the child of God is freed from the law. By the law the Bible always means, not simply the Ten Commandments, but also everything connected with the Ten Commandments. It stands for the outward types, ceremonies, and indeed everything that Moses instituted. The whole of the institutions of Moses are called "the law." Everything instituted by Christ is called grace, or the gospel. We are delivered out from the law, as a system of salvation, and brought into the grace of God, which gives us salvation. Now, then, it might be thought that the Christian is not under any law, while the exact opposite is true. In the seventh chapter of Romans the apostle says, "the woman that hath an husband is bound by law to the husband, while he liveth," but after the husband dies "she is discharged from the law of the husband." If the husband dies she is free from the law which forbids her from being joined to another man. In like manner we also are made dead to the law "through the body of Christ, that we should be joined to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God." So that while we are free from the Ten Commandments, and the whole system instituted by Moses, we are *under the law to Christ*, or as it is in the Greek, we are *enlawed to Christ*, that we might be for another. He is, in essence, all that the law commanded and promised. Being joined to him, we fulfill the righteous demands of the law, while we live for him who died for us and rose again.

The Ten Commandments are summed up by Christ

as enjoining perfect love to God, and love to our fellows, equal to that which we have for ourselves. This was *law*, and the man who obeyed this law earned life by righteousness. "This do and thou shalt live." But the difficulty was to find the man who was able *to do and live*. In the place of these commands of the law John puts faith in the name of the Son, and love one to another. That is, instead of loving God with all our minds and all our hearts, we are to have faith in him who *has loved God* with all his mind and heart, in our behalf. Instead of loving our neighbor as ourselves, we are to have benevolent love toward those who belong to the body of believers. We are to believe on the *Son*, and love the *sons* of God. This is the essence of our duty now. It is not, therefore, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men that is now revealed by Christ and enjoined upon us. It is the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Christians. Toward all others it is not the relation of *brotherhood*, but of *benevolence*. We should be willing to do and to be anything that is honorable to save the lost people of all nations. Our prayers and efforts should lead us to use every means in our power that their eyes may be opened to see their ruin, and that their hearts may be enlightened to accept their Saviour. Indeed, our very lives should be given in their interest. But our brotherhood is made up of the community of believers.

These commandments given by John, are the exact opposite of the Ten Commandments; they differ as law

and grace always differ. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." But the first commandment of John is, "Believe on the name of his Son." In other words, believe that God so loved the world that he sent his Son. The Old Testament demands *love from me*; the New Testament commands me to believe in *love from him*. The old commandment was, "Give me *thy* love"; the new commandment is "Take *my* love into thy heart." The old said, "Love God with all your heart"; the new says, "Let God love you with all his heart." Then, on the other hand, the old commandment was "Love your neighbor"; the new commandment is "Love one another." Israel was viewed as a nation, and every one belonging to it was considered as a part of God's family. Now, however, there is an election out of every nation, and the command is, not love for every one out of one nation, but love for some out of every nation. Therefore, we are not commanded to love our neighbor, but love one another. In the old commandment our love to our neighbor is to be the same as our love to ourselves. In the new, it is beyond that, *to love as Christ loves*. We are en-lawed to Christ. He is our ideal and the spring of our life. His life impels us and his love draws us. As he is the Saviour of all men and especially of those that believe, so we have a relation to all men, but a special *tie* that binds us to believers.

It is an extraordinary fact, that never once in the New Testament does God say "Love me," "Give me

thy heart." He does say this again and again in the Old. There is, however, a record in the New Testament of *his love* to us. This begets love in us, and we love him, because he first loved us.

Again, the commandment of Moses came at the very *beginning* of the nation's history. But this commandment is presented here at the very end of the revelation of God to his church. In the Old Testament, however, the commandment came only to the people who had been brought out of Egypt, but here it is to all mankind. The essence of the command is this: "I have put my Son upon the cross to show you how much I love you; believe in my love, and *after* you have believed in my love for you, see that you love one another." It thus follows that we are not under law but under grace; not under Moses, but under Christ. We have the divine life, and it will show itself in righteousness and love.

We are looking up to God in confidence now, and we are waiting for the appearance of Christ by and by, and we can assure our hearts of perfect acceptance. We have freedom to speak to God in prayer, and we know that he hears us, for we are seeking to keep his commandments. These commands are simple; the essence is that we receive his love into our hearts and deal it out again to his people; to receive it in unhindered fullness and freeness and to let it flow out to one another in the same fullness and freeness. The whole essence of the Christian life is to revel in the love of God, to be overwhelmed with it, to be full of it, to be

molded by it, and then to let the sweetness of that love go out to those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Then follows the statement that he who "*keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him.*" That is, if we keep the commandments of Christ, we will abide in him and he will abide in us, and the only way that we know that he abides in us is by the Spirit whom he gives us. We now have the Holy Spirit, and he will implant in us the tendencies and characteristics which, in complete fullness, were seen in the life and character of Jesus our Lord.

CHAPTER XII

TRUE AND FALSE SPIRITS

In a former chapter John has shown how the "antichrists" were opposed to the Christians and also how the Antichrist is opposed to the Christ. He now proceeds to contrast "the spirit of truth" with the "spirit of error," or true and false spirits. Just as the spirit of Antichrist was shown to be opposed to Christ and his followers, so now we are to see that "the spirit of error," speaking through false prophets, is opposed to "the spirit of truth." *1 John 4 : 1–6*

This consideration of the true and the false in the realm of spirits, grows out of John's statement in the preceding chapter that Christians have the Spirit of God abiding in them. This indwelling of the Spirit is the characteristic endowment of the children of God in this dispensation. They were never called Christians before, because they were not anointed ones in the same sense in any previous age.

But there are other spiritual powers about us that may influence us, and even dwell in us, powers that are not of God. It is easy to see that a submissive yielding to the Spirit of truth outside of ourselves might open the way for submission to that other spiritual force

called "the spirit of error." Moreover, false prophets, that is, men professing to speak for God and from God, who were in league with that malignant and unseen "spiritual host of wickedness" which is opposed to God, had arisen. False spirits were speaking through them, although they claimed to have communications from God. On this account John raises a warning voice declaring that there are evil spirits about us having their false prophets, who might lead astray the confiding disciple. Therefore "*believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God.*"

False teachers, whose mold of thought and purpose of life have become conformed to the wishes of these evil spirits, are the indirect channels of their opposition to Christ and the saints. They also approach us directly by suggestions of ambitious aims, the love of money, of power, of honor, and even of a knowledge that is not according to God. They gain possession of those rejecting Christ[1] and gratify their unnatural desires in the sins that are not so much as to be named among us. Alas! too often these spirits approach the saints and lead them astray through the sensual desires of our nature, by suggestions which are abhorrent to them when living in conscious communion with their God and Father. All such approaches and wrong influences, from the unseen realm, are practical revelations of the world of evil spirits by which we are surrounded. These spirits, whether good or bad, must necessarily operate through human souls, in exercising their power

[1] Matt. 12 : 43–45.

upon the stage of life, and hence the introduction of false prophets.

It is not an unimportant thing to understand that there is a great, unseen spiritual force about us. This is not a superstition, but a *tremendous fact.* To be ignorant of this fact will lead to confusion, discouragement, and despair.

"Oh, it is hard to work for God,
To rise and take his part
Upon the battlefield of life,
And not *sometimes* lose heart."

After a few years of earnest, conscientious, and intelligent fighting, we shall lose heart at *all times* and sink into utter despair, without a belief in the supernatural power of God that will some day rise to the rescue and move on to victory.

At the head of the unseen world of spirits acting for God stands our Lord, "exalted above all principalities and powers." His executive representatives on earth during this present dispensation are the Holy Spirit and the various orders of holy angels. Myriads of angels are here upon earth *serving God* while ministering "unto them who are heirs of salvation." As a servant in a household renders service to the head of the house while caring for the interests of the guests, so these angels render divine service while ministering to the saints.[1] These angels, as may be seen especially from the books of Daniel and Revelation, also perform important functions in connection with the governments of

[1] Heb. 1 : 14.

the world. The Holy Spirit and the angels work for and through the children of God, indwelt by the one and ministered to by the other.

On the other hand, there is just as truly a world of evil spirits, called *demons* in the Greek, which pervade the whole of the unseen world about us. There is but *one devil,* called Beelzebub, that is, the Prince of Foulness, while there are legions of demons under his direction. The whole mass of foul and fetid ways of man upon the earth is formed, fashioned, and directed according to the wishes of the "god of this age," under the agency of the myriads of demons. But let it ever be borne in mind that the spirits of departed men and women *do not* make up the number of these spiritual forces for good or ill. No one any longer sings

> "I want to be an angel
> And with the angels stand."

Whatever else is left in doubt in the Bible, it is made as plain as day that the spirits of our departed friends, whether saved or unsaved, never again appear upon earth until the return of the Lord.

The origin of this devil and these demons has been a subject for the wildest speculation. We must regard this as among "the secret things" that belong unto God. Milton has fixed the conviction in the Saxon mind that they are fallen angels, and some statements of Scripture point in that direction, but farther than this we cannot go.[1]

[1] Jude 6.

We influence each other by words, looks, acts, or gestures. Our unseen self conveys its thoughts, feelings, or volitions by these channels. Although it is not easy to understand or explain how a spirit, without such mediums of communication can act upon our spirits, we may have some hint from a fact recently discovered. It is now generally accepted as true that each person possesses what is called an "atmosphere," and that influences may be communicated through this medium alone. May not this well-attested truth give some intimation of how the spirits of the unseen world influence us, and all the more as we yield to their suggestions? But, however accomplished, the Bible teaches, and experience confirms, the belief that evil spirits do come into contact with men of the world and influence them, just as the Holy Spirit becomes a molding power to the believer in Christ. The "familiar spirits" of the Old Testament, the "seducing spirits" of the New, the so-called "mediums" of Christendom, and the "demons" whom the Gentiles still worship, all come under the head of the evil spirits spoken of in this chapter by John.

It will be seen that in this passage John puts us in the midst of two contending forces, just as he does everywhere else in this Epistle. Darkness and light, truth and error, life and death, God and the world, the Spirit and the flesh, Christ and the devil, Christ and the Antichrist, Christians and antichrists, good spirits and bad spirits, are set over against each other. Because we are in the midst of these two spiritual

forces, the Apostle Paul says to the Ephesians, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood." That itself would be a great contest, but it is the *smallest* side of the warfare of the Christian life. We have to fight against "principalities and powers, against world rulers of this darkness and against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places." No wonder he exhorts us to take up and put on the *whole armor* of God that we may be able to withstand and to remain standing.[1]

Being thus placed, we are to try, to put to the test, to examine, and prove the suggestions of these spirits. The whole range of influences that do not act upon the senses but upon our spirits, which do not proceed from things which may be seen and handled—all spiritual forces are to be put to the test.

Our Lord uses this word translated "try" when complaining that the people of his own times could determine from the appearance of the heavens or the directions of the winds, early in the morning, what kind of weather would prevail during the day.[2] Keen and ready as they were to examine these outward signs, they were unwilling "to discern the signs of the times" that would lead them to accept the true Messiah or, at least, to understand the awful consequences of his rejection. When speaking of the searching examination which a man should make of himself to determine whether he is in the faith, and as a preliminary to the Communion, Paul uses the word.[3] It is also used to express the examination which should be made in de-

[1] Eph. 6 : 11-17. [2] Luke 12 : 56. [3] 1 Cor. 11 : 28 ; 2 Cor. 13 : 5.

termining that which is well pleasing to God.[1] When the Christian is exhorted to examine his own works that he may determine whether they are according to the mind of God, this word is used again.[2] Christian men and teachers are also to be tested and the same word is used.[3] Indeed, we are earnestly exhorted to put all things to the test and hold fast that which is good.[4] From this use of the word, it is plain that the apostle is here urging us to be careful and test every suggestion that comes to our hearts and minds. Nothing should be received hastily, but everything should be subjected to calm deliberation and severe searching. The words that come from religious teachers should likewise be put to the test, for "*many false prophets are gone out into the world.*" The Bereans were the more noble because they tested everything by the light of the Jewish Scriptures.

There is no hint that the test is to be made by "the priest" and that his decision is to be received by the people. All believers are taught to make the test for themselves. John is writing to the whole Christian community and not merely to the leaders or pastors of the flock. There is no infallible human authority to which we can appeal. There is no one who is to decide for us or to dictate to us what is and what is not of God. Neither the experts of criticism nor the popes of ecclesiasticism can determine truth for us. Each Christian must test all things for himself, and the standard by which all things are to be judged is the infallible word of God.[5]

[1] Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:10. [2] Gal. 6:4 [3] 2 Cor. 8:22; 1 Tim. 3:10. [4] 1 Thess. 5:21. [5] Gal. 1:8, 9.

Our Lord took knowledge of false teachers. He did not definitely identify them with wicked spirits, but he did say that they were ravening wolves within, however much their outward appearance might be like inoffensive sheep. He also called to remembrance the false prophets of the Old Testament, of whom the depraved sons of those degenerate sires always had something good to say. Respecting the teachers of his own day, who plotted to destroy him, he left them to draw their own inferences. When we come to the Acts of the Apostles these grim intrusions from a world of darkness again appear. Barnabas and Saul came in contact with one Elymas the sorcerer, a man in connection with some ancient form of spiritual delusion, who is described as "full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil"; and this man resisted them in their effort to bring the Roman ruler to the obedience of faith. At Philippi this unseen power of evil opposed the truth through a damsel possessed of a spirit of the Pythian Apollo, which ruled the Delphic oracle, and that oracle was consulted and obeyed by the Roman world.[1] All through the New Testament, from the entrance of Christ upon his public ministry till the close of the apostolic period, these spirits of error appear upon the scene, and they have their false prophets, who both resist the truth and seek to lead the servants of God astray.

After this warning John proceeds to give a perfect

[1] Satan ruled the Delphic oracle; that ruled Pagan Rome; and Rome ruled the world at that time. Satan was *then* "the God of this world," and is he not so still?

means of detecting the spirit that is of God and the spirit that is not of God. "*Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh,*" and having remained in the flesh (for the word has that significance), "*is of God.*" The question is not one of inner faith, but of outward act. It is a bold and frank confession of Jesus Christ and of his having come, in every sense of the word, in human form. The denial of the incarnation, or the refusal to acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is the denial of that which is characteristic of the Christian faith, and is therefore not of God. Man's need as a sinner could be met in no other way than by the incarnation. Only a man could act for men in their relation to God. The Saviour of the world must therefore be a man—spirit, soul, and body. To deny this is to deny all. The one making the denial is not of God.

Previous to this, when John was speaking of *men*, he declares that they were not of God when there was an absence in their lives of divine righteousness and love. In the case of *spirits*, however, they show that they are not of God by failing to confess the incarnation. The *proof* that the confession which *we* make of Christ having come in the flesh is genuine, is the pursuit of righteousness and love. The *proof* that a *spirit* is of God is the confession of the incarnation. The denial of the incarnation is a proof that such spirit is not of God. How beautifully these harmonize! When Christ came it was the coming of grace and truth or love and righteousness. When we manifest love and righteousness in

our lives, our confession of Christ is genuine and complete. The spirits cannot exhibit their lack of love and righteousness, but they *can* deny the One in whose ways love and righteousness were seen in perfection. Therefore, for a spirit to deny the coming of Christ in the flesh is the same thing in *their* sphere as the absence of righteousness and love in *ours*. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and the "spirit of error" will deny these in *word*, while we may deny them in *deed*. It may also be added that this denial of the incarnation of Christ is a denial of his Deity. The Deity or pre-existence is involved in the statement that "Christ Jesus came into the world." If he were merely a man he could not *come*, he would be *born*, and could appear in no other way than in the flesh. All *men* are born of the flesh. Jesus was God manifest in the flesh. And this denial is the spirit of the Antichrist who is yet to come in the world, and whose principles are already working in the world. The word "cometh," used with reference to the Antichrist, is the same as that used with reference to our Lord.

The spirit of evil always seeks to rise and rule, while the spirit of good stoops to serve. Jesus was rich and he became poor; he was originally in the form of God, but did not deem that condition a possession to be eagerly retained. He emptied himself of his riches and humbled himself from his station so as to become a servant in the likness of men, and consented to suffer the death of a criminal. This was the deliberately chosen path in which he delighted to walk. Unless he

had really and truly "come in the flesh," this humiliation was impossible on the human plane. Now the Holy Spirit identifies us by regeneration with this very Christ. Being begotten of God, we are of God, indwelt by his Spirit, and we are brought into fellowship and sympathy with that love which passeth understanding, but which was commended unto us by the death of Christ while we were yet sinners. Having our root in God we will confess, both in heart and by lip and life, the same self-effacing spirit that stoops to serve. For "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." But Satan hates this path. He has chosen the exact opposite for himself. The evil spirits under his control share his feeling, follow his example, and deny both the *fact* of the incarnation and the *grace* which it reveals. All who are linked to this world of evil will also deny the supernatural coming of Christ in human form and will ignore the inward experience and outward walk unfolding the same divine grace and service. "*This is the spirit of the antichrist whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already*" (4:3).

We "*are of God . . . and have overcome*" these evil spirits, "*because greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world*" (ver. 4). We have overcome because we have accepted the fact, and also, the love and grace manifested by the incarnation of Christ. We have believed on the Son of God and accepted the love of God. This has opened the way for God to come upon the scene. In this confession we owned the fact of sin that made the incarnation a necessity, and the love of God

that made it a possibility. We put ourselves in the dust, where we ought to be, and God on the throne, where he belongs. This brings us into the midst of a war with the "wicked spirits in high places." It is the old battle between "the seed of the woman" and that "of the serpent." In Adam's day of innocence the dispute was about the goodness and severity of God. In Cain's day it was a question of sin deserving death and the necessity of blood-shedding for its remission. Since the crucifixion the question has become more definite. It is still sin deserving death, with the added fact that the blood of Christ is the sole ground of forgiveness, acceptance, and worship. To reach this point, is to overcome the greatest of foes and to become a sublime victor. This is to be in harmony with God but, also to become the object of hate from the unseen world of fallen and rebellious spirits.

This is not merely a victory in discussion or in mental conceptions concerning Christ, but in the acceptance of himself. If all men would confess with the mouth, and in heart and life, Christ as having come in the flesh, and also, the humbling truths into which this stupendous event fits, the kingdom of Satan among men and rebellion against God would end at once. But the devil hates the thought of God revealing his grace and truth in human flesh, and begets the same hatred in his servants.

False spirits have their false teachers, who oppose it as a superstition and ridicule it as an offense. They are only exhibiting the spirit of the one who sought to slay

Christ through the jealousy of Herod, who betrayed him through the cupidity of Judas, and who, by one supreme effort of Satanic skill, aimed to shipwreck his integrity by an appeal to every human desire, through the bribe of a world. But our Lord triumphed and this triumph becomes our own. He acted for us then ; he is in us now.

Those who make this *confession* are of God, just as truly as the Holy Spirit who makes this *revelation* in the Scriptures is of God. We thus say the same thing as the Holy Spirit, and become identified with him in our testimony.[1] The Spirit who testifies to the reality of the Son of God in human flesh, is of God, and our acceptance of this witness gives proof that our inner life is also derived from God. But those who deny the incarnation and the grace which it manifested are not of God. Denying self for the good of others, giving instead of gaining, stooping to help instead of climbing to hinder, humility instead of pride, form part of this confession. Jesus made everything subject to God ; Satan would have everything subject to man and himself at the head. All modern tendencies are to measure everything by the human standard and to submit all to human judgment and opinion. These tendencies lead men to declare what God *ought to be*, instead of accepting the revelation of himself as he is. They make men vainly talk of "the Christ that is to be," while they ignore the Christ that is and ever shall be. They proudly sit in judgment upon the Scriptures instead of

[1] John 15 : 26.

submitting to be judged by them. False spirits and false religions exalt man and make most of his needs, his likes, and of what is due to him. Man has always the first place in their systems, while God counts for little. They look at everything as it concerns man's interests, but object to referring anything to the sovereignty of God. They prefer the accommodation of heaven's ways and rights to the earth, rather than the perfect assimilation of earth's ways to heaven. They want the stars to be adjusted to the watches instead of the watches to the stars. But Jesus always places the glory, the sovereignty, and the will of God first. If we accept Christ as come in the flesh, and thus become identified with him and filled with his Spirit, we overcome these God-dishonoring, man-pleasing, and devil-serving spirits. Our humility is our triumph, our debasement is our exaltation, and we are victors over evil when vanquished by God.

"*Ye are of God—they are of the world.*" God and the world are always set against each other by John. Just as the branch has its organic connection with the root from which it springs, so believer and unbeliever have their origin and point of contact. The one springs out of God, and the other out of the world. The true believer has overcome these spirits, because he is possessed of a greater force than that which is in the world. The Christian is said to be indwelt by the "seed," "the word," "the unction," and also by the Father and by the Son. As for the world, however many the evil spirits controlling it, they all act under

"the prince of this world."[1] The world "lieth in the wicked one."[2] But greater is God in Christ who abides in the church by the Holy Spirit, than the evil spirit who abides in the world.

Having considered the teaching of the spirits as an expression of their character, and having pressed home our duty to test these spirits by their teaching, he proceeds to give his instruction a more practical turn. The *men* through whom these spirits speak and the *hearers* who lend a submissive ear to their false instruction have their characters revealed. "*They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*" Satan has formed this evil world and out of it he has developed these teachers; therefore they speak of the world. They draw the substance of their teaching from the world and it finds acceptance with the kindred natures of the world. They reduce God's truth to the level of men's judgment and identify the true God with the "god of this world," mistaking the material progress of the world, under the energy of Satan, for the coming of the kingdom of righteousness and peace.

"*He that knoweth God heareth us.*" The world listens to those who express its own thoughts, but the Christian opens his mind and heart to the one who teaches him more of God whom he already knows. He that is of God heareth the words of God.[3] The false teacher speaks of the world, but the true teacher speaks of God and not of the church or the world.

[1] John 12 : 31. [2] John 5 : 19. [3] John 8 : 47.

Believers listen because the life they possess needs grace and peace multiplied "through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." "All things that pertain unto life and godliness" come through the "knowledge of him that hath called us unto virtue." He who has a progressive knowledge of God, who is advancing in grace and knowledge of the truth, will hear the true teacher. A man may be "of God," and yet the old life may have come to the front so as to retard his growth. Such a one may be deluded by false teachers. But the disciple, marked by obedience and growth, will always hear the teacher of truth. There is a striking correspondence between the spiritual intelligence of the man who is of God and the acceptability of the teachings which are of God. The state of mind of the one who tests and of the person and truth to be tested are in close relation to each other. The Spirit opens the eyes to try and he opens the doctrine to be tried. The spiritual man who teaches will have unfolded to him what the spiritual hearer receives.

The same is true on the other hand of the world and its false doctrines. What the true Christian is to the true teacher, "the world" is to the false prophet; and what the true teacher is to the believer, the false prophet is to "the world." Each fits into the other. The world likes to be flattered and readily receives what corresponds to its own conceptions.

The evil spirit forms the taste of the world and then provides for it a congenial food. Christendom became a "leavened lump," and the spirit of error found for it

the leaven of evil teaching. The evil spirit sharpens the world's appetite for a false kind of religious teaching and then influences the teacher to furnish the palatable food. Hence false prophets are sure of their success. They arise out of the world, of the world they speak, and "the world heareth them." They catch the spirit of the times and voice the thought of the age which is opposed to God, and those who belong to the world readily listen. Satan cannot succeed with those who are of God, for he gives us spiritual intelligence and sympathy to try the outward truth that is presented. Being of God we hear the truth that is spoken by his true servants.

Satan is great in power, wisdom, and resources to attain his own devilish ends. He molds the world of which he is the energizing power. It lives, moves, and has its immoral and intellectual being in him. He dictates its laws, its code of honor, and its pleasures. He is the ruler of its darkness. He aims to have the religious part of this world contented with the form instead of the power of godliness. He throws himself into the world's moods and controls its longings. Then, when all is to his liking, he prepares his prophets and teachers to gratify its palate. Sometimes they are men of truth as well as of falsehood ; sometimes they are holy men and even men of prayer and of God, but men out of present fellowship with God. Then he brings the men he has doctored into contact with the world he has diseased and skillfully adjusts the one to the other. The doctrines he prepares draw their inspiration from the

world in its spirit, tendencies, and aims, and "the world heareth them."

How many striking illustrations of this are seen in the history of the church! All the way, from the grossest superstition to the most ingenious and refined speculations, from the vilest deeds to the most amiable purposes, has Satan been molding the world of Christendom and providing teachers for its tastes. If the world wants a golden calf, there is always an Aaron prepared to take the women's jewelry and transform it from an index of pride to an instrument of idolatry. If the people will have smooth things spoken in a time of peril, there will always be false prophets to utter them while they malign the Jeremiahs and Micaiahs of severity and truth. If men grow weary of the new wine of the kingdom, he will give them the old wine of the flesh. He will never mourn and the people not lament; he will never pipe and the people not dance. He will prepare the crowd to mourn at the lamentation and to dance at the piping. He will have a flock for the teacher and a teacher for the flock; a people for the priests and priests for the people.

Satan has a world of his own inside the professed church. Here also he prepares false prophets to satisfy that which is desired. If men want a gospel that glorifies man, ministers to his pride, denies the blood and the atonement, makes the incarnation a mere step toward glorifying humanity, instead of witnessing to its depravity—a gospel that speaks of the first sin of the race as the "ascent" and not the descent of man, then that

kind of a gospel will soon be found. If there comes into any church a craving for excitement, for signs and wonders, Satan will soon produce them. History is full of the fate of strong men who have been carried off their feet by the tide of a popular desire. They drink in their teachings from the times, become intoxicated with their worldly dreams, and shape their lives to suit the tastes of a lukewarm church walking arm in arm with a self-satisfied world.

But God is stronger than Satan and is opposed to the times. He gives spiritual discernment by which we recognize the truth. He brings us under condemnation and then tells us of a Christ who was condemned for us; he shows us our lack of peace and then tells us of Christ whose chastisement purchased our peace ; he makes known our iniquity, and also the One who was bruised for its cleansing ; he speaks of our disease, and then points to the One who can heal ; he reminds us that we are miserable and poor and blind and naked, and then commands us to buy of him the gold refined in the fire, that we may become rich; he makes us thirsty, and then invites us to the water of life. Indeed, he so forms our hearts that nothing will satisfy us but himself.

"*We are of God,*" saith the apostle, and "*he that knoweth God heareth us*"; but "*he who is not of God heareth us not.*" And this is true to-day. The one who is not of God will not hear, and "*by this we come to know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*"

The sum of the truths of this passage seems to be this : God has a people here on earth who have his Spirit in

them. By virtue of this Spirit they are united to God. In addition to that there are a great many angelic agencies ministering to these people. On the other hand there is a world both outside and inside of this professed church. This world is conformed to Satan and linked to him. Under him are innumerable agencies of "devils," or demons of various kinds and orders. God warns his people against the influence of these evil spirits and furnishes a means of detecting them. Then he tells why they have already overcome these evil spirits, and how it is that some men will *not* listen to the testimony given by the apostles, but *will* listen to the testimony given by those who, under the influence of evil spirits, are opposed to them. By this means men as well as spirits are tested. The confession or denial of Christ having come in the flesh determines the character of spirits. But the men who speak and the men who hear are also tested and revealed by the denial or confession of the same truth. And in this way we come to know the spirit of truth from the spirit of error, or the Spirit of God and the agencies connected with his Spirit from the spirit of Satan and the agencies connected with him.

These evil spirits manifest themselves in a two-fold way. First, they oppose those affections which we see in Jesus Christ—the grace that led him to leave his riches for poverty and his glory for shame that he might save men. Whatever opposes these features in the life of Christ must be called the spirit of error.

Secondly, these evil spirits oppose the fact and the

belief that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. They deny the fact that he *has* come and the promise that he *will* come again.[1] They speak learnedly of "the essential Christ,"—whatever that means,—but his miraculous conception, his virgin birth, his supernatural resurrection, and his glorious coming in person and power they deny.

The world will listen to these vague and meaningless phrases. It is fashionable to honor the name of Christ and therefore they are glad to have it retained. But the lowly spirit of Christ they hate, and therefore they are glad to have some ground for denying the incarnation which makes it known. They will retain the *name* but will deny every superhuman fact that gives it meaning, and every divine truth that makes it our "light and salvation."

The true child of God, however, is shocked by these denials and turns away from them all in alarm. These are the strange voices of false shepherds. "A stranger will they not follow but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." On the other hand, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do." "He that is of God heareth the words of God; for this cause ye hear not, because ye are not of God."[2] This tells the whole story in a sentence.

[1] 2 John 7. [2] John 8 : 43–47.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WAY OF PERFECT LOVE

1 John 4 : 7–14

Both world and church have been considered in their relation to the company of unseen spirits. They are clearly distinguished from each other even when the world is supported by spiritual powers. The church is of God and should be inspired by the good spirits, while the world is of the evil one and is molded by spirits of error. They can never be made to move in harmony without the one or the other becoming changed in character.

Having taken this outward glance at the unseen world, the author returns to consider Christians and also their conduct toward one another. It is no longer the believer's relation to good and evil spirits *without*, but his bearing toward strong and weak Christians *within*.

"*Beloved, let us love one another.*" In the region of *thought* the confession of Christ, as having come in the flesh, was shown to be fundamental. It was the test of whether *spirits* were of God or of the evil one, of the truth or of error. But in the region of *action* love among the brotherhood is the distinctive mark of the divine life. The confession or denial of the *incarnation* determines the character of *spirits*, but the practice or denial of *love* determines the character of *men*.

This relation to one another (*αλληλους—allelous*), has a striking prominence in the New Testament. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." He has illustrated this new principle by washing the disciples' feet and ended by saying, "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet." We are members one of another, and therefore should not lie one to another ; we are to submit ourselves to one another and yet to admonish one another ; to receive one another as the Lord hath received us and to speak no evil of one another ; to use hospitality to one another and to be like-minded to one another ; to have an inward spirit so that in honor we shall prefer one another and in desire pray for one another ; we are not to judge one another any more, for we are one body in Christ and severally members one of another ; we are to confess our faults to one another and to forbear one another in love ; to have the same mind one toward another and to be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love ; to bear one another's burdens and, through love, to be servants one to another ; to consider one another that we may provoke one another to love and to good works ; to comfort one another with words concerning the good hope of the coming of the Lord and the resurrection of the dead. We are exhorted to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another ; to abound in love one to another and to be careful to love one another with pure hearts fervently. And then we have that precious gem in the Pauline Epistle of love : "If there be any comfort coming from Christ, if any consolation growing

out of love, if any fellowship as the result of the indwelling Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, fulfill ye my joy that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one soul, doing nothing through faction or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind esteeming *one another* better than yourselves" (Phil. 2 : 1–4). And finally, in our Epistle, we have the climax : "If we love one another God abideth in us and we in God." What a cluster of tender exhortations are here in the relation of the brotherhood of Christians bound together by the sweet chords of charity. Surely this is the "kingdom come," the will of God "done on earth as it is in heaven." It is heaven in germ and principle. In this sense the kingdom of God is already within us, and, when established on the earth this condition will become universal.

All love is of God ; it is of his essence. It is communicated and not created. It was, and is, and is to be. God alone is capable of love such as was manifested in the gift of his Son. We too become capable of its holy passion when begotten again. It is the only process through which this love can come, and the fact of its existence *in us* is proof that we are of God. He that loveth *is* begotten of God. His origin is in God and the connecting link remains unbroken. His love shows that his spiritual being is from God and that he is in active sympathy with God. He knows God experimentally and habitually and recognizes every further revelation, more fully unfolding his character. If we are of God, we ought to give proof of our origin by lov-

ing those begotten of God. If the sun is heat and light it cannot send out what is cold and dark. If by regeneration we are human reproductions of God then *we shall* love one another. "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." There is one eternally and only begotten Son of God, and he loves. The sons of God, begotten in time, have the same nature of love.

He also "*knoweth God.*" We are incapable of this knowledge until we are born again. The possession of the divine nature is necessary to the understanding of what that nature really is. It is a knowledge of which one who is only a creature of God's hand is utterly incapable, however wise and learned. He lacks the capacity to grasp it. The Son alone knoweth the Father, and he alone can reveal him to those who have the spirit and nature of sons.[1]

Indeed, everything depends on a participation in the divine nature. "*He that loveth not, knoweth not God,*" no matter how religious he may be. It is not religion but *life* that unites us to God. Having the life of the Son, we have the love and the knowledge of the Son.[2] The only proof that we know God is that we are like him in love. This is deeper than the previous thought of keeping the commandments.[3] That was outward *conformity* to his *revelation*, while this is inward *union* with his *nature*. And the man who loves not, knows not our God. It is the same fellowship with God that we saw in the first chapter. It is union with God as

[1] Matt. 11 : 27. [2] John 17 : 25. [3] John 2 : 2–5.

he *is* in himself and not merely delight in his *ways* or his *works*. God is light and we walk within its glow; he is love and we share its fervor. We *enjoy* the light, but we *feel* the love. Step by step we rise. We keep the commandments, we acquiesce in the doings, and we share the nature of the only God. It is the Lord's prayer realized, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected in one."

The reason of this is evident, "*for God is love.*" Love is of the very essence of his nature. Even justice is but one manifestation of his love. The more tenderly a mother loves her child, the more severely will she resent any attempt to do him hurt. Love will seek the good of all who are the objects of its affection, even when justice demands the punishment of those who would do them wrong. Since the essence of God is love, the one who does not love can never have known him. Not to love is to be ignorant of love, and to be ignorant of love is to be ignorant of God, for God is love.

It is of the nature of love to make sacrifice for the good of others. The extent of the sacrifice measures the depth of the love. God's love is like himself; it is infinite, and it stops at no sacrifice in giving blessing to his creatures. It is exercised toward us, in us, through us, and for us.

According to the teaching of John here, it comes to us first of all in the incarnation—Jesus coming from God in the flesh. It is a love that is not merely manifested by or through our Lord, but *in* him. Creation, even under the curse, may still show something of the

love of God. But Jesus is the beginning of the brighter light of the new creation unmarred by the soiling of sin. The doings and the teachings of Christ were exhibitions of his love, but its climax is seen in himself. God is love, and that love is *seen*, is unfolded to view, by the sending of "*his only begotten Son into the world.*" It was God as God, and not the Father, who sent his Son into the world. It was God, in his eternal relation to all men and things, and the Son, in all of his divine majesty and preciousness to his Father's heart, who was sent and who came into the world. The sending and the coming, therefore, were an exhibition of that love that always was in the heart of God, but never before found an adequate expression. The coming of the Son was not the price, but the gift, of his matchless love.

It is a love of which we are naturally incapable and of which we could form no adequate conception—*it is all divine.* And as he alone was qualified to reveal the love, because he is the Son in the bosom of the Father, so we can only know and feel this love when we become the children of God by birth from the Father. Therefore it is love in us (ἐν ἡμῖν—*en hemin*) and not merely toward us. We are the *occasion* of its manifestation and the *medium* in which it was effective. Sharing the life of Christ, we become a secondary sign of this divine love. It is the manifested love of God *to* man repeating itself *in* man.

Again, the *benevolent purpose* of Christ's coming revealed with still greater emphasis this love, "*that we might live through him.*" We were dead and he came

that we might live, not merely that we might be saved. He came as the active expression of love that we might become living exponents of that same divine life of love. It is the activity of life that John always has in view, rather than the security of salvation. This is life in reality and not mere existence. It is life in union with the great fountain of life, joyous and Christlike. God sent the best he had,[1] to impart to us the best that we are capable of receiving, his Son, who was the embodiment of his love.

But this love went still further. Not only has it come into the world that we might live, but that we might be forgiven. We were dead and he came to give life; we were guilty and he came to make "*propitiation for our sins.*" This love was seen in the Son's coming into the world, and the vision brightens when we learn that he came that we might live; but it grows brightest of all when we see him dying, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." If man had not fallen, the incarnation would have been enough to reveal the character and love of God. To indulge speculation is not wise where God has been silent. Still, it is safe to say that in the absence of sin the incarnation was possible and probable, but the crucifixion would have been impossible. Man being a sinner, Christ must die both as a man and as a sinner.[2] He did not die on the accursed tree, but he became a curse himself.[3] He came where we were, in the place of cursing, and therefore died on the tree, the symbol of cursing, to be the

[1] Mark 12 : 6. [2] 2 Cor. 5 : 21. [3] Gal. 3 : 13.

propitiation for our sins. Here at the cross, in the place of cursing, is where he found humanity, and not at his birth. Here is where the veil of the temple was rent and the graves were opened, types of sin put away and life secured. Had he stopped short of the cross, these had never been secured. What marvelous love! For the mighty Son to have become a babe and the One in the form of God to take the guise of a servant is marvelous, but the climax is reached when the sinless Son is made sin for us. It was the love of God seen *in* his Son. The sacrifice of the eternal God in sending, was not less than that of the Son in coming; the love in *giving* was no less than the love in *dying*. "Herein is love."

This love did not originate in us, it did not begin with man, but with God. Whatever love man may have is but the result, the faint echo, of a note of love as deep and welcome as it is sweet and divine. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." "*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.*" We learn love, not from its poor results in ourselves, but from its perfection in God as manifested to us. We know it by the gift of the Son and we enjoy it by participating in his life. The proof and nature of this love are given in that which is wholly outside of ourselves. We know what love is and when and how it is revealed. It was perfect in God when we had no love, and perfect in its manifestation toward us. We know that it is not in ourselves, but in God, coming to us when we were destitute of its experience.

Now this is a doctrine and it has a duty. This is a great fact, and when known it creates a great obligation. The doctrine being accepted and the fact received, then will come the sweetest fellowship with God and the most blessed results among men. How could it be otherwise? We are not merely treading on heaven's borderland here, we are in heaven itself. Nay more, we have been looking into the heart and considering the overflowing wealth and glory of Him whose presence creates heaven. Let us uncover both head and feet; let us bow to the duty and take up the obligation with the same joy which we experience in accepting the gift.

"*If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*" Surely this is true. We ought to love in the same way and the same persons as our God and Father loves. The children ought to show the characteristics of the Father. The great incentive to our love is God's wonderful love to us.[1] We must love, for God loves; we must forgive, for he forgives. The natural converse of "God so loved us" would be, "we ought to love God." But it is through *human* affections and duties to human beings that the divine life and love are manifested. We are to love as he loves, to love all whom he loves, and to love them with his own great love flowing through the channel of our straitened hearts—"*we ought also to love one another.*"

We have not seen God, we cannot see him. No one has ever seen him. In John's Gospel (1 : 18), it is rather, no man hath obtained a view of God sufficiently clear

[1] Eph. 4 : 3; 5 : 1, 2; Col. 3 : 13.

to found a revelation. But here the very word used indicates a *continuous* beholding, which might secure fellowship. In Exod. 24 : 10 it is said that "the elders saw God and did eat and drink," while in the thirty-third chapter of the same book it is said, "man shall not see me and live." Manoah said : "We shall surely die, for we have seen God."[1] The apparent contradictions are explained when we remember that there is an unrevealed glory of God, "dwelling in light and unapproachable."[2] No man can see *that* glory ; but in "the Angel of the Lord" and in the "cleft of the rock" of the Old Testament there were manifestations of God. They were partial revelations of which Jesus is the fullness, for he could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."[3]

Although we cannot see God, we know that he is not far away from us and may be in us, the life of our lives and the love of our loves. It is most interesting to see that in the Gospel, when it is said, "no man hath seen God," the answer to that unsatisfied desire is, "the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," hath given him an exegesis. He who was nearest and dearest to the Father, who as Son knew the Father, has revealed him to man. Here in the Epistle, however, the answer to the same unfilled longing is, "*if we love one another, God abideth in us.*" "No man hath beheld God at any time" ; but in loving one another, we are assured of something *better* than a mere sight of God, he *abides in us.* By the impartation of

[1] Judg. 13 : 21–23. [2] 1 Tim. 6 : 16. [3] John 14 : 6–9.

his nature and by the gift of his Spirit, leading us to love one another, God dwells in us as he has been made known to us in his Son. The God who was made known by the Son dwells in us. If no one has seen God, the answer to the desire for the vision is, he was revealed in his Son and he dwells in us.

Active love to one another is witness to the indwelling of God. He does not *say*, he only *suggests*, that he is revealed in us as he was revealed in the Son. The obligation is suggested by the wondrous thought of the indwelling God, and the association in such glory with the Son of God. How this throws light on a former saying, "which thing is true in him and in you." God in him and in us, manifested in him and in our measure in us, *loving* in him and in us. Here again the Epistle fits into the Gospel. The life and love that *were* in Christ as the Son of God are now in us as the sons of God.

"His love" is more than the love that he has to us, or the love that we have to him. It is the love which is his essence, which answers to his nature, and which has its origin in him. That love is perfected in us when we love one another. So that loving one another proves both the indwelling of God and the presence of divine love in the most perfect form. Man has then received God's love and made it his own. Therefore, God's love has found its fulfillment, has attained its end on the earth. And this is God's love perfected in us. That *great end* set before the love of God is reached when we love one another. In ourselves we

are still imperfect, but the *love* has reached its end and aim and *it* is made perfect. What higher point can men reach than to love what God loves and to love as he loves? And this is not a point reached by effort on our part, but by God dwelling in us and loving *his own love* through us. "*His love is perfected in us.*" So that it is not an effort on our part to imitate him; it is rather an abandonment of ourselves to him so that he may live and shine and love through us; not imitation, but the reproduction of Christ is the point reached.

Has our love reached this point? Does it go out to the seen world, to men? Do we love the men we see just as God loves us in spite of what he sees? And is our love deep, genuine, and beneficent as God's love? Are those who are unamiable and unattractive loved by us? Is our love quenched by the repellent things which we see? Do the misery of the lost and the sorrows of the saved attract us as they do God? Do sinners in their sins attract our hearts as they attract the heart of God? In other words, are we looking at our fellow-creatures through the eyes of the world or through the eyes of God? We need to see as God sees, that we may love as he loves. And this love should have the same character and go out to the same objects as the love which glows in the heart of God. God's love is self-sacrificing, communicating, and beneficent, and it goes out toward all mankind. Is this the manner of love with us?

If we have reached this point, then two very solemn things follow. First, we are the means or agents through

which his love is perfected. In us it finds its completion. Beyond us there is no chance for its manifestation. God has nothing further that he can disclose to remove the sin, to melt the hardness, or to attract the heart of the human race. His heart has been laid bare and there is nothing beyond. Secondly, the reproduction of the love of God in us is the last and crowning act of God's mercy to the world. It is the last sight the world will ever have of that divine, self-sacrificing, sinner-forgiving, never-ceasing, overflowing love of God. When the brotherhood of believers is removed from the world, or when the world is removed from this divinely indwelt part of humanity, then *farewell to all sight of love!* God has nothing further on which to base a second probation—the end has come.

Thus we see this love in its various stages: first, in the heart of God; then shining in the incarnation of Christ; then brightening in its gracious purpose to cause us to live; then culminating in going to the cross to make propitiation; and last of all, re-incarnating itself in the church and repeating its benevolent and beneficent ways toward an unloving, unlovable, and rebellious world. "*Hereby know we that we abide in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*" We participate by the presence of his Spirit in the divine affection. We thus know that he dwells in us and the Spirit makes us conscious of his presence. And thus in the savor and consciousness of that love we, with John, have beheld and bear witness that "the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

CHAPTER XIV

AS HE IS, SO ARE WE

1 John 4 : 14–21

In the previous chapter we saw the perfect love of God attaining a perfect manifestation in the sphere of man. It came from God as its fountain, through the Son as its channel, into the world as its sphere, and unto us, under the curse because of sin, as its objects. It continues to come and finds its goal and perfection when we love as God loves. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us," although John does not present that side of this truth. He steadily keeps to his central thought of life. He links us in a common life to God, and "we abide in him and he in us," and this we know "because he hath given us of his Spirit." This life, fostered by "the love of the Spirit," goes out from us in its sympathy and activity as from the God of love, and in us it is made perfect. It is a love that came from God in "the only begotten Son," and *it continues to come* through the "many sons" begotten again, exhibiting the same traits and lavishing its wealth upon the same objects in us as in him.

We are now to see this love casting out fear from the *heart* and producing active benevolence in the *life*.

The apostle has just shown that the love of God was

manifested in the coming of Jesus. The Spirit in our hearts is the internal evidence that we have been reached by this love. He also declared that Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, was sent into the world, that he had already come, and that the purposes of his coming were to give us life and to make propitiation for our sins. He now declares that he has seen—contemplated carefully—this expression of love and bears witness that "*the Father hath sent the Son, the Saviour of the world.*" His work was sufficient for the *whole* world. Only in one other place does John's thought extend to the utmost bounds of the human race. The Samaritans, after having believed because of the testimony of the woman who saw the Lord, said: "We have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world." And he is indeed the Saviour of *all men*, especially of them that believe.[1]

Since this is true, it necessarily follows that if any are not saved, it is not the fault of the plan of God nor of the work of his Son. The fault is with those who will not conform to the one nor accept the other. The infinite misery of the world was that it did not recognize and cherish the love that God manifested toward it. The world denied, and still denies, such love and refuses to have communion with it. John bore witness

[1] 1. In bearing the "sin of the world," whatever guilt attached to man, because of his connection with the head of the race, was removed. Therefore, the "world" before actual sin is saved. For the same reason infants and idiots are saved. 2. Forgiveness and repentance are offered to all in good faith through Christ; he is "Saviour of all and specially of them that believe."

to what he saw and thus left the world without excuse. The Christian faith rests upon the historic revelation of the divine nature made known by competent witnesses, so that man's unbelief is without any reason for its existence.

The confession of Christ by us is now mentioned for the third time: "He that confesseth the Son hath the Father"; "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God"; "*Whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God.*" When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, the Master declared that no human power, nothing short of the grace of the Father, made that known to him. And Paul declares that "no man can say Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Spirit." It follows, therefore, that the recognition of the true character of Christ is proof of the gracious working and indwelling of God by his Spirit. To make the confession that Jesus is the Son of God proves that God dwells in the one who makes it. Jesus was declared, marked off, to be the Son of God in a sphere of power, by the resurrection from the dead.[1] To confess him as the Son is, therefore, to acknowledge his death and resurrection in giving satisfaction to the Father for our sins. It is saying back to God the very things he has said to us concerning his Son by raising him from among the dead. In making this confession we follow in thought and feeling God's dealing with his Son in our behalf until we see him risen from the

[1] Rom. 1 : 4

dead, *God satisfied with his work* and *we satisfied with his salvation.* The recognition, therefore, of the revelation of God, accomplishing salvation in his Son, is the sign of his presence. The confessor dwells in God and God in him. The acknowledgment of the deity of Christ is the foundation of our salvation and is essential to the Christian faith. Limiting our fellowship to the circle of those who acknowledge a divine Saviour is, therefore, not a matter of choice, it is a question of loyalty and of obedience.

God in us and we in God. This complementary view of the Christian life is presented by John in many ways. God's love abides in the believer and the believer in love.[1] Eternal life abides in him and also in the Son.[2] The truth is in him and he walks in the truth.[3] The word abides in him and he abides in the word of God.[4] He abides in the light and the unction of the Holy Spirit abides in him.[5] "He that abideth in love abideth in God and God abideth in him."

"*We know and have believed.*" Sometimes we believe to know and sometimes we know to believe. It is true that we must understand the one we trust before we can exercise unreserved faith. But, on the other hand, true faith opens the way to fuller knowledge of the one trusted. To trust Christ and to surrender all to him prepares the way for fuller knowledge and loftier communion. Here knowledge leads to faith. We know that the love of God gave Christ to die and

[1] 3 : 17; 4 : 16. [2] 3 : 15; 5 : 11. [3] 1 : 8; 2 John 4. [4] 2 : 14; John 8 : 31. [5] 2 : 9, 27.

we are led to the exercise of faith because of our knowledge of that marvelous fact.

In ver. 14 of this chapter, John says: "We have beheld and bare witness that the Father hath sent the Son." Here he declares, "*We know and have believed the love which God hath in us.*" How simple and real to the one who believes. We have known this love, but we have not exhausted its meaning. We know that we are the objects of that love and that God has shown it toward us. This is infinitely better than trying to persuade ourselves that we love him. It is a richer portion to be loved by him than to have love for him.

But those who believe partake of Christ's life through whom the love was shown, and thus they themselves become the *sphere* in which this love makes itself felt. The love becomes a power in the Christian body and repeats itself. And on this side of the truth John now enters; but, not until he recurs again to the great fountain of all his thoughts and the foundation of all his hopes, "*God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.*" If he did not abide in us we could not and would not love. Loving one another and abiding in love are evidences of God dwelling in us. Love is not an accident in God. It is not a caprice for certain times and certain people, but that which is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," and has no respect of persons. Abiding in God we will abide in love as our native soil. We will revel in love, as if "to the manner born." We ought to be engaged in loving deeds, as the essence and aim of our lives, to

give proof that we abide in the God of love. By dwelling in love, and by letting love permeate and govern us, we dwell in God and God dwells in us. Here John has reached the very heart of the universe. The secret of the Eternal is discovered, and we dwell in this "secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The essential essence of God is love, and that love is our home.

In this double relation of God in us and we in God, love is perfected in us. Three times love is spoken of in this Epistle as becoming perfect: In the second chapter, love is made perfect in the believer when he keeps God's commandments; in the twelfth verse of this chapter, it is perfect in the church when we love one another; and here, love reaches its perfection when it delivers us from all fear. In the first case, the perfection is in the heart of the believer leading to obedience; love has reached its end when an obedient life is developed. Love in the heart always produces obedience in the life. In the second, it is perfected in the body of Christians, leading to good fellowship and brotherly love; it is God's love begetting itself in us and loving its own love in our hearts. And, finally, it reaches the climax in securing such fellowship between God and his children that his love flows out in unhindered freeness *to them* and their trust reposes in unbroken confidence *in him*. Thus love, which always seeks the highest good of those who are loved, attains its end and its perfection. The highest good which God purposes toward man is secured by a loving obedi-

ence, by active benevolence, and by sweet confidence —obeying, repeating, and resting on, infinite love. Love flowing from the heart of God and returning from the heart of man, therefore, finds its completeness, its perfection, in casting out fear in this communion between ourselves and the Father.

Thus we see the various steps of "the love." First it came to us in this world. Then it followed on to the sinful state in which we were, to give life and to save. It then took possession of us and acted in us, loving its own love in our hearts, and continuing its manifestation to the world. But, finally, having come to our world and to our place in sin, and having seated itself upon the throne of our hearts, we are now to see how it places us upon the throne of Christ's glory. He took our place in sin. Amazing grace! We take his place in holiness and in love and in glory. This is love and grace surpassing thought! It saw all, measured all, took in the need of all, and then moved forward to the end, making us as Christ is, without any question of sin, to all eternity enthroned before the face of God, fearless and confident.

Therefore there is no wonder that all fear is banished. In 2 : 28 we saw that by abiding in him we shall not be shamed away from him at his coming. But here we have something higher. There is *now* no fear of the day of judgment, because "*as he is, so are we in this world.*" In the first case absence of shame depends on our faithfulness. In this, the absence of fear is dependent on his love producing love and confidence.

We must not mistake about perfect love here. Love to be perfect must be both in the lover *and* in the object loved. Nothing else will cast out fear. If, in view of the judgment, I rely upon the love that I have to him, I shall be haunted with the thought of the weakness and wretchedness of my love. But if I give up thinking of my love and lose myself in the divine love,—the very love to be revealed in the day of judgment, the love that I am dwelling in and that is dwelling in me, the love that gives me a home in its bosom and the love that has made for itself a home in mine,—then I can have boldness.

It is God's love that is so shared with us as to form a love relationship between his children and himself. It is the love which is of the very nature of God, and which came out to us in the saving grace of his Son, that is perfected with us (ἐν ἡμῖν—*en hemin*). God's love is shared with us in this precious fellowship. But love shared between the lover and the loved in a mutual fellowship of love, casts out fear, for fear hath punishment. The existence of the one is inconsistent with the existence of the other. There is an incompatibility between these two affections. Thus the perfect love of God obliterates fear in us.

The basis of this confidence which casts out fear, is our union with Christ as he is now. Not as he *was before* he came into the world, nor as he was *while* in the world, but as he *now is* on the throne. We are in this world not as he was then, but as he is now. Surely such love, so displayed, is perfect.

This is important. Personally Jesus was always dear to the Father, but as the one sent to save the world, there was a cloud charged with wrath that came between him and his Father's love. Divine justice inexorably demanded, in the interests of holiness and government, the stern execution of the sentence of death. This cloud followed him to the cross and there enveloped him in unutterable darkness. Justice had to be perfected before love could be perfected. Jesus shrank from that day and was crucified in weakness.

But it is not so now. "Death hath no more dominion over him." He has borne, in our room and stead, the pains and penalties which our sins entail upon us. The wages of sin are to be paid by him no more. And we, by consenting to be *as he was then*, become as he is *now*, glorified with him. We confess that the death which he took *we deserved*, and that the glory to which he was raised *he earned*, but earned for us. And thus we may have the same boldness that he has in facing the day of judgment. There is no more reckoning with him for our sin. He looks forward no more to the hour of the cross nor to the question of sin, for he hath put it away forever. What he faces now is the day of conquering and crowning. The perfect love of the Father will bring this in its own season. What we too have to face is the victory and the crown which love—perfect love, love flowing with unhindered freeness through a holy channel—will bring to us in the same glory. But the question of sin and judgment and death is past with us as they are past with him.

"The love wherewith he loves his Son,
Such is his love to me."

"*He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*" He has not laid open his heart to the free, frank acceptance of divine love, as the plant opens its bosom to the sunshine and rain. When that love is thus received, then there will spring up in us such love as will make our whole intercourse with God confident, loving, and *restful*—a love which believes that God *wants us* to be confiding children and not trembling slaves.

True love has no element of fear in it. On the contrary, it is the spirit of self-surrender combined with desire for the highest good of those who are loved. It therefore cannot have fear. The perfect love of God, if known and believed, must cast out fear. So long as there is the slightest fear felt, love has not yet reached perfection in us. The Christian is the sphere where love attains perfection, and love is the sphere where the Christian attains perfection. Love may be perfected in us and we in it.

In verse nineteen we have the first time that John has ventured to mention *our* love. Until now he has been absorbed with the greater, nobler, and more divine love. Up to this point all had turned on God's love, manifested by him, known and believed by us, communicated to us, present with us, and made perfect in our obedience, benevolence, and confidence. Now he ventures to speak of our echo to God's anthem, our reflection of God's light, and our response to God's love.

"*We love,*" not him,[1] but *we come to love,* "*because he first loved us.*" He loved us not only before we loved him, but when we were still hateful and hating. His love came to us and begat love to himself, love to his children, love to all mankind, even to our enemies, if there are any. It is important to see that John does not say we *ought* to love him. Love is never once *demanded* of us toward him in the New Testament. Love is given to us and the fruit of this divine love toward us is that *we love.* It is the first breathing into our souls of heaven's sweetest affection. God first breathed into Adam and then Adam breathed out into the air. He first pours his love into us and then we pour out his love to others, which has now become our own.

Real love to God will always show itself in love to the brethren. If we do not love the *seen* brother, we cannot love the *unseen* God. If any say that they love God and hate their brother, they are liars. They are not simply telling an untruth, but they are themselves altogether false. God will accept no love to himself apart from love to his children. He is afflicted in their afflictions. He will not share honor when they are left in shame. When Israel dwelt in tents, he abode in the tabernacle. Not till they had their ceiled houses did he accept a temple.

It is impossible to love God and not love the brother, for the following reasons :

1. Our brethren are begotten again, recreated in

[1] The Revised Version is correct in leaving out "him."

the image of God. It is absurd, therefore, to profess love to God and yet cherish hate toward the brother. If we have an aversion for the *human likeness* of God, we must have an aversion for the *divine prototype*. A picture of a person dear to our hearts can never be looked upon with hatred, and the closer the likeness to the original the greater the fondness for the picture.

2. It is a command that "he who loveth God, love his brother also." If we love him we shall keep his commandments, and this is one of them. To divide the love of God from love of the brethren is to divide it also from obedience to God. "*And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*"

3. If we love God, it is because he dwells in us. Love is not natural to us. He has put his own love in us and accordingly we must love as he loves. He loves the believer, who is our brother. If we love with the same sort of love as God, then we too must love our brother.

Our love must be no idle sentiment, without sympathy or sacrifice, but a love that seeks, waits, prays, and saves —a love that gives, that lays down life itself. And this love must still go out in spite of what we see in others as well as because of what we see in them. We must love our brother first before he loves us, yea, even if he shall hate us.

The love of the brother is not a natural attainment, but a divine gift, and it is therefore a test of our relation to God. If we belong to God we love with the love

that is of God. This love will go forth to persons and things, not as they are attractive to us, but as they are attractive to him. The brother is so attractive to God that he gave his Son to die for him. That same love in us will lead to the same devotion and sacrifice by us. The law could not produce love in us by all its threatenings and thunder. But God has put to death the old life of hatred in Christ and has imparted a new life, and every fibre of its being inspires us to love.

CHAPTER XV

BEGOTTEN OF GOD AND OVERCOMING THE WORLD

1 John 5 : 1–5

It is the habit of John to turn from the outward to the inward, from the formal to the vital. He keeps near to the center of things. This makes it hard to see the bearing of each paragraph on that by which it is preceded. We must look below the surface.

The connecting link between this and the preceding section is the thought of brotherhood. But the Christian brotherhood is based upon a community of divine life, and the obligation to love is laid in the very nature of this new relation rather than in the expression of a written commandment. The injunction that he who loves God should love his brother also, has its origin not only in the will of God, but also in the fact of our sharing *the new and divine life* with every brother in the faith.

The *condition* of this union with the Father and of a common possession of the new life is faith in Christ. This faith is also a *sign* of the life. "*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God.*" Believing is used here in its full and definite sense. In the third chapter it expresses belief in the revelation made concerning Christ, and in chapter four belief in

the love that was manifested through him. But here it expresses the personal relation of a believing soul to the Anointed of God. In addition to this truth about Christ and the love manifested in him, it is a *reliance upon him*, bringing the believer into vital contact with him. The one who believes that Jesus is the Anointed of God for the purposes of salvation, not only admits an intellectual truth, but receives all that is involved *in that truth*. The apostle has previously considered the confession of Christ in relation to society, but he has here in mind solely the faith of a soul in the person of Christ without any regard to another. It is man meeting God in Christ and with heart and mouth echoing God's testimony about himself and his Saviour. It is the very essence of what is needed to make a child of God. It is more than assent to a proposition or a truth. It is even more than the expression of a truth. It is the naked contact of a soul with God through his Saviour. Martha did not understand a word the Master said to her in the midst of her sorrow. When she was asked if she believed what was said, she answered: "Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God." She went behind what was said, to himself; his words were beyond her understanding, but she believed in *him*, and *that was salvation and rest*. She had faith in the right person, and that is the right kind of faith. Every one who thus believes is begotten of God.

This belief implies that the new life is already rooted within. It is the sign of the new life as well as the

means of obtaining it. And here we come to the foundation of all that John has written in this book. Life is the theme in this book, fellowship is its keynote, holiness is its fruit, truth is its law, love is its essence, and faith is its root.

Now, then, every one who is thus begotten of God will love his Father who begat him, and the love of the Father implies the love of the children begotten by him. A child will naturally have love for a father. It will naturally return to the one from whom life has been received. As the same life is communicated to the whole family of faith, love must also flow toward those children who possess, at least in germ, the same possibilities of character because of their spiritual birth.

Previously love toward the brotherhood was commanded, but now it is named as an essential fact. If we love God, we must love his people; if we love the brethren, we must love the Father by whom they were begotten. If we love the Father, love for the children will not be wanting ; if we love the children, there will be no lack of love for the Father. Thus, both sides of the great truth are stated. It will be seen from this that the love of God and the love of the children of God do in fact include each other. We perceive that we know God if we keep his commandments and his commandment is that we love one another. If we are begotten of God, we cannot help loving our Father and also all the children who are recreated in his likeness. John has reached the spring of life at this point and he can go no deeper.

But how can we know that we love the children of God? Only when we love God and observe his commandments. Love to the brother, as we have seen, proves the reality of love to God; and here we learn that love to God is the test of love to the brethren. The reality of the love to the brother is shown by love and obedience to the commands of a common Father, and obedience is possible because of the new life possessed. Now if the fact that a person is born of God is the incentive to love, then it follows that we should love all who are begotten again. Our love will be exercised toward brethren, not merely because we find in them pleasant society and congenial companions, but because they are our brethren. Our love to the brotherhood was previously stated to be the sign and condition of love toward God. Here our love to God, manifested in keeping his commandments, is itself the sign and measure of love to the children of God. It is "*children*" here, those in whom the divine life may have the *least possible development*, but in whom the life truly exists. So we may say, we love the brethren whom we see, and therefore we love God whom we have not seen. Or conversely we may say, we love God and keep his commandments and therefore we love the brethren. The existence of the one form of love is good ground for assuming the existence of the other. And because of this inward experience of love and outward obedience to commandments we come to know that we love God and love his children also.

It follows that in order to be assured of the reality

of our love we must walk in the path of obedience, both in relation to God and to the brethren. It would be a proof of *want* of love to God should we love and fellowship his children when walking along the path of disobedience. We can only love the children of God truly and wisely when we love and obey him of whom they are born. Unless God has the true place of supremacy in our hearts, what appears to be brotherly love may be a sentimental impulse that shuts out God from the whole sphere of our spiritual life. It comes to this then: True brotherly love will be extended toward all the children of God because they are children; but it will not always consent to their teaching nor fellowship their walk. A love without absolute submission to God may be a carnal preference or a sectarian prejudice. The test of love is *doing* his commandments. We know we love the brethren when God is the object of our affection and his commandments are the guide of our conduct. True love can never go outside of these commandments in a service to the brethren. No matter how plausible the excuse, any apparent service that requires disobedience to God is by that very fact barred from the sphere of love.

The explanation of this test is that the love of God consists in this one thing, that we have in our hearts a continuous and watchful endeavor to keep his commandments. Every utterance of God will be carefully regarded, and this regard will lead to the doing of his commandments in outward life. In every case where there are love and obedience to God, we shall come to

know that we love the brethren in spite of misunderstandings, separations, and estrangements.

Thus far we have seen that the love which was manifested toward us is also that which glows in our own hearts toward others. This love was not a vague dream or mystic sentiment in God, and it will not be such in us. It became a real act of self-sacrifice and condescending benevolence in him, and it commands and secures the same in us. If he gave his life, so should we lay down our life for the brethren. In this we *begin* by loving our brother whom we have seen as God loves him and us. This is the proof of love to God whom we have not seen. After this our love turns toward God and immediately there comes from him the command that we love the brother also. Last of all we come to the heart of this atmosphere of love between Father and children, between brother and brother. It is this: Originally man was in God's image. Its manifestation was lost in Adam, but it was recovered in Christ, revealing God as he is and man as he ought to be. This image is also *restored* in the children begotten of God through the only begotten Son. By regeneration they are created after the image of God in righteousness and holiness of the truth. The image was perfect in him, but embryonic in us. Loving the character of God, of whom we are begotten, we cannot help loving the same character seen in those who have been begotten of him. Thus the inward instinct of the new life corresponds to the outward command, for loving God in the heart *is* keeping his commandments in the life.

And these commandments are not grievous, although there are great obstacles in the way of keeping them. The world is walking according to the great enemy of every principle of the government of God. If we become occupied completely with the commands of God, the world's hatred will soon appear on the scene. Moreover, the world has its comforts, its delights, and most of all, its opinions, which we shrink from opposing. The less we are filled with the Spirit of Christ and the power of the new life, the more these things will have weight with us. The way of the world and the commandments of God are in opposition to each other. Only when we are living in the power of the new life derived from God shall we be able to surmount the difficulties which the world opposes to our walk and overcome the tendencies of the flesh which restrain our love. The Christian's new nature is insensible to the attractions of the world, because it is of God. He has a divine nature and walks by the principle of faith, which is the very opposite of the way of the flesh. But, alas, he also has the flesh within him. Only God can keep the believer dead to its demands. Westcott says: "Natural taste, feeling, and judgment may check spiritual sympathy, but every faculty and power which is quickened by God is essentially stronger than the world and realizes its victory at once."

If our new relation to God has full sway in our hearts, it will divest us of all feeling of irksomeness in the path of obedience. This is not the case naturally, for the moment the commandment impinges upon our

conscience there is rebellion in the heart. But God in his grace has revealed Christ, and receiving him, the Holy Spirit has renewed our whole nature, or rather has imparted a new nature. This nature cannot help loving the commandments of God, for it is derived from God, and cannot be opposed to any commandment given by its Author. His commands are now easy, not because they lower the standard of righteousness, but because love becomes the motive. It is always a delight to do what the one who is beloved desires. It is then that we find "I will" covering exactly the same ground as "I ought." Moreover, he gives power to obey his commandments. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

How wonderful, to find that the commandments which were once distasteful become at last our joyful pursuit! There may be in us, as there were in our Lord, groans and cries and tears in doing and suffering the will of God here and now. But the new life of love implanted in the heart will be joyfully obedient, no matter what form the will of God may take. Our "obedience of faith" enrolls us among the honorable number who are "begotten of God and have overcome the world."

"*This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith.*" Faith may mean either the thing believed or the act of believing—that which is objective, as embodied in confession, or that which is subjective, as indicating trust in the heart of the believer. In this place "our faith" seems to mean all that is summed up in the person and work of him whom we confess as

"the Christ, the Son of God." He overcame the world,[1] and to become linked to him by faith is to share his life and to obtain a part in his victory. It is not merely that we have a victorious faith, but we are identified with a victorious *person* who overcame the world. Hence the form of the statement, "this is the victory that hath *overcome* the world, even our faith." The victory of Christ had a narrow field, but it covered every point of our experience and our need and it is world-wide in its effects. By faith in him we enter into its triumphs and share its benefits. Accordingly, this faith is both the thing believed and the act of believing, and it gives us a present share in a past triumph. Our faith puts us in the place of him who conquered all things for us.[2]

But this is a new element in the Christian's fellowship with God. In the first part of this book, our fellowship was in Life, then in Light, and then we had fellowship in Love. Now we are brought into fellowship with the Son of God in his relationship to this world. Being begotten of God, because of our faith in Christ Jesus, we overcome the world, standing in the

[1] John 16 : 33.

[2] Dr. Maclaren says: "If you do not take Christ for your teacher, you are handed over, either to the uncertainty of your own doubt or to pinning your faith to some man and enrolling yourself as a disciple who is prepared to swallow down whole whatever the rabbi may say, giving to him what you will not give to Jesus; or else you will sink back into utter indolence and carelessness about the whole matter; or else you will go and put your belief and your soul into the hands of a priest; or shut your eyes and open your mouth and take whatever tradition may choose to send you. The one refuge from all these is to go to him, and learn of him, and take his yoke upon your shoulders."

same relation to the world in which our Lord stands. It is fellowship with him, not only in what he is, but also in what he *has achieved for us.*

The world which we overcome seems to be that which makes the commandments of God grievous or irksome. If so, any system, or way of life, or society, or companionship of man, that makes us feel God's commandments a burden, is the world to us. That way of occupying the mind, amusing the fancy, gratifying the taste, stimulating the passions, kindling the imagination, or interesting the heart, which lessens one's interest in spiritual things and makes one's duty to God grow irksome, tiresome, distasteful, that is the world which our faith must overcome. Whenever we are inclined to be slow to respond to duty, or reluctant to make sacrifices for the good of others, or unwilling to go forth on errands of mercy, that which makes us so is the world to us, and it should be abandoned by faith. For faith is not something done and done with. It continues to the end.

"*Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*" Is there any other, among the race of men, who is victorious? Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. Signs from heaven and works on earth attested that claim. But the world was blind to the signs and misinterpreted the works. It disputed the claim, accused the only devout man on earth of blasphemy, and branded the only perfect man that ever lived as a malefactor. He was delivered over to the Roman government for condemna-

tion and crucifixion. The judgment and the execution of that day have never been reversed. To believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is therefore the beginning of victory over the world. But further still; this faith in the Son of God is the condition of receiving the new life. This life is the source of that love which was seen in him, and which in our measure repeats itself in us. It is that love which manifested itself in active beneficence, illustrated in the life of the Lord, and it is the exact opposite of the selfishness and hatred of the world.

The world rejected Christ. It gave him a stable for his birth, a world hating his ways as the scene of his life, and a cross in the midst of a jeering mob on which to die. It condemned him to the stake among thieves, robbers, and murderers. It cruelly and brutally scourged, before killing him, as if such a death were not enough. It then nailed him to the cross, to be hung like a common criminal. Now, when we put our faith in this world-condemned Son of Mary, we have overcome its unbelief and its hatred, its malignity, its injustice, and the absolute blindness of its mad and insane depravity.

This is the victory, even our faith. No man has triumphed over the world until he has become united to Christ and achieved the victory at this crucial point. He is the free man who has been made free by this truth received in his heart; all others are the slaves of an insane and savage world. All who are born of God are standing in and upon a victory obtained by the One through whom they derived their new life.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself overcame the world by faith. He "endured the cross, despising the shame," because of his faith in the "joy that was set before him." When he stood before Caiaphas, helpless and friendless, he declared, "Nevertheless" (in spite of his abject condition *now*), "hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power." His faith was vivid and intense and far-reaching. He was blind to what he saw on earth, but he had an eye open to the glories of heaven. He was deaf to earthly sounds, but he had an ear quick to hear every word that came from his Father's lips. "Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? Who is blind as he that is at peace with me, and blind as the Lord's servant?" [1] On this account the world had no hold on him, the prince of this world had nothing in him. There was no place of disloyalty or weakness, no lurking element of possible impatience under the yoke, in him. He was the servant of God, with the spirit of the Son, and therefore was joyfully obedient.

When we have this same spirit of sonship, we too may overcome the world in practical walk as well as in intellectual belief. We may have to cut off a right hand or pluck out a right eye and to treat the flesh and its lust as if they were dead. We may have to "go outside the camp, bearing the reproach" of Christ; we may have to forego harmless pleasures; we may have to part from those whom we dearly love; we may have to lay down our life for the brethren. These things will

[1] Isa. 42 : 19.

be grievous and yet joyful, "sorrowful but always rejoicing." Like Christ, we will look forward to the end. Like Moses we shall endure, "as seeing him who is invisible," and in the end, we will assuredly rise to the height of our great position, and share the victory that overcomes the world.

We have had great knowledge, great joy, great fellowship, great intimacies, and great rank as sons of God; but here is a great victory over the world, insuring a final possession of the glory of heaven.

CHAPTER XVI

THE THREE WITNESSES

1 John 5 : 6–12[1] In the previous part of this chapter the apostle has told how our faith overcomes the world, which for a few days was disposed to patronize Christ, but in the end shook him from its lap, condemned him to death, and put him upon the cross. We, however, take that same Jesus, who was crucified by the combined hatred of Jew and Gentile, and make him our Lord and our God. We acknowledge that we owe everything to him and have nothing apart from him. Very naturally, then, the apostle asks the question : On what authority do we commit our interests for time and eternity to this Christ ? What extraordinary facts lead us to accept him, in spite of such universal condemnation ? He proceeds to say that Jesus came by means of water and by means of blood ; and also that he has three witnesses testifying to his character—the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

There has been very much dispute as to what is meant by Jesus' coming by water and by blood, and also as to how the Spirit, the water, and the blood bear witness to

[1] No reference is made to the seventh verse. There is no dispute among scholars—all agree that it does not belong to the sacred Scriptures, and is properly omitted by the Revised version.

his character. Concerning this we may say, first, that these words point to some purely historic facts apparent in the life of our Lord on earth. Secondly, it is assumed that these facts are so real and patent that they become the introduction and terminus of God's testimony to those who put their trust in him.

It will be readily seen and admitted that the two great facts which correspond to these conclusions are the baptism and the death of our Lord. The exact expression here is both *by* and *in*, water and blood. The one implies the means through which, and the other the element in which, he came. In the Old Testament *water* and *blood* were everywhere connected with the service of the sanctuary. Hence John says, "*He . . . came by water and blood*," as if to impress his readers with the fact that the Son of God was fulfilling everything that these types had caused them to expect. He was manifested by means of water and by means of blood. He came, and fulfilled in *symbol*, all the promises that were made to the fathers concerning the Messiah in the act of baptism, and the fulfillment was made in *reality* at his death. "*He that came*" is equivalent to "He that hath fulfilled the promises to the fathers, as the Saviour sent from God."

Christ existed before the act of baptism, and he exists now, since he died. He did not exist *manifestly*, however, before his baptism, and he is not manifestly before the world now. This Epistle of John is entirely about the *manifestation* and revelation of Christ. He speaks of that which was *seen*, *heard*, *gazed* upon, and

handled. He treats, therefore, only of that part of our Lord's life which was exposed to the senses of the world.

The water and the blood point to two distinct historical events in the earthly life of our Lord. The one is the point *a quo* (from which), the other is the point *ad quem* (to which). Baptism in water was the *starting-point* of his manifestation, and the death on the cross was the *terminus* of his manifestation. Hence, he came by means of water and by means of blood. The Lord Jesus did not show himself to the world as the Son of God before his baptism, nor did the world get a view of him after the cross. He came in by water and passed out by blood. One was the door of *entrance*, the other of *exit*. He came to fulfill all righteousness in his baptism, and he accomplished that righteousness upon the cross, crying, "It is finished."

John the Baptist came baptizing in water in order that Jesus might be manifested to Israel.[1] The only contact that Jesus had with John was at his baptism and during the time of the subsequent testimony given by John, a few days afterward. It will thus be seen, that Jesus entered into his manifestation on the earth, among men, at the time of his baptism. He terminated that manifestation at the time of his death, in pouring out his blood on the cross. As he passed out from the view of the world in blood, so also he passed in before the face of God by means of his own blood. It was the blood of the brazen altar and the blood before the

[1] John 1 : 31.

mercy-seat combined. It was the body without the camp and the blood within the veil. The one was seen by man, and the other was seen by God alone.

Therefore, John, who was simply speaking of the unfolding or manifestation of Christ, and also of the purposes for which he came among us, names only these two points : the one where he *began* and the other where he *ended* the work of his manifestation. He came to be seen that he might reveal, he revealed that he might accomplish, he accomplished that he might return to his Father's face. It was not the beginning of his life nor the end of his days, of which John was speaking, but the *beginning* and *ending* of that manifested life, *before men*, revealing the unrevealed and the unseen God. Baptism marked the point when he began to be manifested before the world. The blood of the cross marked the point where it ended. He was only seen by the chosen witnesses after his accomplished decease.

The last sight that Pharaoh had of Moses was when the first-born of the land fell under the stroke of justice. The last time the world saw our Lord was when the first-born of all creation hung on the stake of cursing. This was according to the type given to Israel. The high priest was seen at the brazen altar in the outer court by *all* the people. When he entered the Holy Place he was seen *only* by the priests associated with him. But when he went into the Holy of Holies, no eye beheld him but *the eye of God*. So Jesus was seen by the people—by the world, during his public ministry and, for the last time, on the cross. After his resurrection he

appeared only to those who were *priests* unto God, because they shared with him the life he had laid down and had taken again. He was in the Holy Place, where we are associated with him now. But when he ascended into heaven, a cloud received him out of sight, and we see him no more. The Holy Spirit has come out and told us that he is at the right hand of God—that he appears *before the face of God* for us—and that his work has been accepted in our behalf.

Before the cross Jesus showed himself equally to all, for he was attracting their confidence by services of unwearied love. After resurrection he is known only to his own. The world had refused his mercy, and had seen and hated both him and his Father. It was not entitled to see him now, on his way to the highest heavens. Only they who loved him in the world should see him in his triumph. Mary and Peter and John, and five hundred unknown and unnamed brethren, should look upon him in full, appropriating faith. And his appearances express themselves differently according to the condition and need of the disciple. He soothes the sorrowful, leads back to righteousness the wandering, and approves those walking in the light, but he makes no appearance or appeal to the world.

It is a very striking thing that our Lord pointed to his baptism and his death (always associated, of course, with his resurrection) as his two principal credentials. At the first cleansing of the temple, when asked by what authority he did these things, he replied: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up

again." He spoke of the temple of his body and of his own death and resurrection. This was his proof of authority. But at his second cleansing of the temple, when his authority was demanded, he said : "The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven or of men?" In the one case he pointed to his baptism, and in the other, to death and resurrection. Again, on three different occasions he referred the Jews who wanted a sign confirming his claim to be the Messiah, to Jonah. "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Here again the sign of divine approval was death and resurrection. These were his credentials. This was simple and natural, for baptism was the outward symbol of the subsequent death and resurrection. Baptism and Jonah's deliverance were the testimony to the Jews, while the resurrection, attested by chosen witnesses, was the testimony to the whole world. Baptism was the shadow, death and resurrection were the substance; baptism was the architect's plan, death and resurrection were the completed building; baptism was the promise, the blood was the performance; baptism was the prophecy, the blood was the fulfillment. By his baptism he drew the outlines of his great work of redemption, and when he came forth from the grave, after dying on the cross, it was found that the outline had been completely filled in, without a flaw or failure. He came "*not in water only*" —not in *type* only, as all the Jewish past had been— but "*in the water and in the blood*," in the *shadow* and

also in the *substance*. This explains why our Lord says of his death, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." His first baptism was a prophecy of the other to come.

The importance of this view will be seen, by supposing that neither his baptism nor his death had taken place *publicly*. If he had begun his mission in secret and ended it in secret, how the whole work of our Lord would have been attenuated and obscured! But with this public beginning and this public ending of the whole life between these two events, we plainly see how he came by means of water and by means of blood.

Now, to this Christ, thus coming, there are *three witnesses*. This is the great question under consideration here. The term "witness" occurs nine times during the short space of five successive verses. John is speaking about the witnesses to the character and work of the Son of God. This is very different from manifestation. The manifestation reveals the Father whom he represented, but the witnesses accredit the character of the Revealer.

First, the Spirit's witness. He is called the Spirit of Truth. He is adapted to give a true testimony because he *is* true, and could not have given any other, owing to his own essential nature. Just as Satan speaketh of his own, in his lies, so the Holy Spirit speaketh of his own, in the truth. But the fact that the Spirit is true is not that upon which the apostle lays emphasis. He only mentions that fact in order to impress upon us the weight we should attach to whatever this witness says.

He could neither be deceived nor could he deceive, and what he says should be taken without qualification or reserve.

The Spirit is named first because historically his witness came first. The whole of the Old Testament, in history, type, and prophecy, was inspired by the Holy Ghost, and bears witness to the Anointed One to come. Hence, in the New Testament, we have the apostles constantly appealing to these writings concerning Christ, as the witness of the Spirit. "The Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David" (Acts 1 : 16) ; the Holy Ghost spake by Isaiah the prophet concerning his rejection by the Jews ;[1] and in the book of Hebrews, it is the Holy Ghost who witnesses to the headship of Christ, and to the perfection of his work, in securing the remission of sins.[2] The Spirit of Prophecy which produced these writings, is the witness of Jesus. The Spirit who breathed out these Scriptures, breathed *in* and through the Lord himself. The living Word spake and acted, as moved by the Holy Ghost.

In the New Testament, it is recorded that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit. By this act he was freed from the taint of sin, so that the Spirit could witness in and through him with divine perfection. He was anointed and led by the Spirit; he did his works by the Spirit ; made his one offering by the eternal Spirit ; was raised from the dead by the Spirit; and, before he ascended, we are assured that "he had given commandment through the Holy Ghost to the apostles whom he

[1] Acts 28 : 25. [2] Heb. 3 : 7; 9 : 8.

had chosen." His whole earthly existence, in origin, in manner of life, in teaching, in death, and in resurrection, was the outward embodiment of the Holy Spirit.

But the Holy Spirit bore testimony to Jesus outwardly, both before and after his ascension, in a way that appealed to the *senses* of men. This witness came at the time of his obedience to a divine ordinance which revealed the character of his work. God had told John the Baptist, "upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon him, the same is he"; and John adds, "I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and it abode upon *him*." But this witness came *after* baptism,—after Jesus came up alive from the place of confessed death,—after death had passed and life had come, as represented in the beautiful *symbol* of baptism. The coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost bore witness to the value of the death of Christ on the cross, and also to the dignity of his exaltation after his resurrection. That descent of the Spirit was God's answer to man's rejection, malediction, and crucifixion of his Son. "Being therefore exalted by the right hand of God . . . he hath poured forth this which ye see and hear." After this, when the Samaritans received the word, when Saul was converted, when the Gentile Cornelius accepted the Jewish Messiah, and when the negligent disciples of John believed on the One that was to come, the same outward signs of tongues and prophecy appeared and appealed to the senses of men. These *outward* signs have ceased, but the Spirit *still bears witness* that Jesus is the Son of

God. He still convicts of sin, because they believe not on him; of righteousness, because he has gone to the Father ; and of judgment, because the Prince of this world is judged. If the believer bears witness to Jesus, so also does the Spirit. "And we are witnesses of these things, and so also is the Holy Ghost, which God hath given to them that obey him." Obedience to Christ secured the Holy Ghost then, and the same is true now. He is received now, inwardly, with as much power as then, even though no outward signs follow. The gospel, which has its origin in the person and work of Christ, is still preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. And the one who accepts Christ as Lord and Master to-day will have this witness from heaven, just as truly as did the first believers on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit bears witness now.

Secondly, we have the witness of the *water*. This refers to our Lord's baptism. In this act of Jesus we see the opened heavens and the descending dove, and we hear the witnessing voice, all three marking the person and the act as worthy of the Son of God. The Son was in the water, the Father spake from heaven, and the Spirit appeared in the form of the peaceful dove. This was the *starting-point* of the ministry of Jesus. God used the water, the baptism, as the occasion for the first testimony to Christ after the signs attending his birth.

The baptism of John was a testimony to the ruined condition of Israel. That nation had sinned and for-

feited life. The axe lay at the root of the national tree ("was steadied against the tree") ready to cut it down. John called on the nation to repent and to confess this ruin and deservedness of death. When the people came out to be baptized, *that* was the confession they made as they owned their sins and submitted to be buried. But John spoke of Another through whom there was hope. All who were baptized promised to believe on this One who was to come. In John's baptism he *did* come. When Jesus came to be baptized he took the place of that nation, condemned to death, and he owned the justice of the sentence against it. He did not confess his own sins, but the sins of those whom he represented. He confessed that they deserved death and in symbol he took that death upon himself; but he also confessed that there was hope *through resurrection*, and *that* hope was expressed in symbol when he was raised out of the water. Therefore, taking the place of the sinful nation and ruined race, he submitted to be buried as one who deserved death. He was raised out of the water as one who would triumph over death in resurrection.

This opens the whole meaning of his baptism. He said, "It becometh us." It became him and it becomes those for whom he acted. It became the second Adam, bringing in a new and holy race, to fulfill all righteousness. That righteousness was reached through death and resurrection—the death of the old and natural life, and the birth of the new and spiritual life. He took a new place after his resurrection from the dead.

He was crucified in weakness, but by the resurrection from the dead he was marked off in a sphere of power, corresponding to his infinite holiness.[1] This realm of power is where he is now, and we have that new place in him. He came to die that we might live. We die in him, that we may live forevermore.

It is only fair to own that this aspect of the truth is more in keeping with the truth presented by Paul than with that of John. Paul speaks of the *way* in which the Christian is justified and accepted ; while John shows us the *life* that comes from God through Christ. Paul sets *us before God*, accepted in Christ, after death and resurrection. John sets *God before us*, in Christ, imparting eternal life, to be manifested in resurrection. Both of them either assume, or teach, that the *natural* life cannot be developed so that it will ascend into the kingdom. The natural life must be set aside, and a new life and a new standing must be brought in. The life of the first Adam is called the flesh, and, in the principle of its will, it is sin. It could not be subject to God nor to his law. Purification, therefore, could only be accomplished through the *death* of the old man and the *birth* of the new. Our burial in baptism sets forth

[1] Rom. 1 : 4 : "Declared to be the Son of God." The word ὁρισθέντος—*horisthentos*, translated "declared," means to mark out by a boundary or limit. Up to the point of his resurrection Jesus was marked by that *physicality* weak though sinless condition which once pertained to him. But from that moment, as by a circle, he was surrounded by resurrection life and glory, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Strength and glory characterize him now, as weakness and humiliation did then (2 Cor. 5 ; 13 : 4). We only know him in resurrection now and no longer according to the flesh.

how we take part in the death of Christ for our sinful nature and for our sins. Having been judicially crucified with him, we are reckoned dead, according to the law. As dead, we ought to be "buried with him by baptism into death, wherein also we are risen with him." As Noah went into the ark, and passed through the very flood that destroyed the world, so we enter into Christ, and pass through the judgment of God. We were *in* him at death, *in* him at resurrection, and we are *in* him now. Baptism is the witness to this. Jesus, therefore, in submitting to baptism, assumed in symbol his whole future work. He had a baptism to be baptized with, in order to complete our redemption, and that was the overwhelming woe which came upon him, pouring out his blood unto death. Baptism in water was the outward symbol of the reality that was to take place in blood.

The third witness is the *blood*. Evidently he means the blood poured out upon the cross. Jesus was a true man. He had come in the flesh. The life of the flesh is in the blood. When his blood was poured out, there was presented to the *senses* an infallible proof that this wondrous man, without human father, controlling all the elements of nature, to whose word even death and the grave were obedient, and whose soul was not holden of hades nor his body of the grave—that this strong Son of God, was the true Son of Man. This is the truth to which John repeatedly bore witness, which he claims is fundamental, and the denial of which will characterize the appalling apostasy of the Antichrist. Jesus came

in the fashion of man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, and soul of our soul. So says the blood of crucifixion.

But at the time of the death of our Lord, there were signs and witnesses to the claims of Jesus, as Son of Mary and Son of God. The sun was darkened for three successive hours, and the heavens were clothed in sackcloth. Then the veil of the temple was rent in the midst, from the top to the bottom, which was witnessed by a multitude of priests. Never before did any blood shed on earth prevail with God to *open, by his own hand*, the way into his presence. The tombs also were opened, and after his resurrection many of the dead were raised and showed themselves to the people in the holy city. To all of this there was a still greater sign, had there only been perception on the part of the people. The triumphant death of Christ—not killed by the mob, but of his own sovereign will *laying down* his life that he might take it again—bore witness to his every claim. Only a Gentile centurion and the soldiers with him seem to have had eyes to see, and they exclaimed, "Truly this was a son of God."[1] He cried, "It is finished, and with a *loud voice* delivered up the spirit." It was a note of *triumph*, in the midst of apparent failure—a shout of victory, when he seemed to be vanquished.

Moreover, the blood testified to the absolute necessity of his death, as the Redeemer of the race. With-

[1] The text seems to favor translating: "Truly this was the son of a god."

out the shedding of blood there is no remission. There is no way back to God except through a full recognition of *the facts in the case.* Man has sinned. Sin is a capital offense against the government of God. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Nothing short of *death* can pay the penalty of death. So there is no way back to God except through the forfeiture of life—and the life is in the blood. It must, therefore, be shed in order to remission.

But there was life coming to us, out of that tragic death. The resurrection, coming after the crucifixion, was the witness to this. Moreover, there was an incident which happened on the cross, to which John attached great importance. Being a Jew, he had learned to interpret the language of symbols, which was even more meaningful than that of words. "Blood *and* water" came from the pierced side of the Saviour.[1] It was not "water and blood," as in the history of our Lord's life, having his entrance by baptism and his exit by the cross. John bore witness, that we might also have faith, for "blood and water" were to him symbols of the whole work of our Lord. Death is the foundation and life the superstructure; death the seed and life the fruit. Hence, blood came first, *cancelling our guilt,* and water afterward, *the promise of life,* flowing from his heart. By the blood-shedding God sees no sin in us; and in the water he sets forth the gift of life. God not only forgives sins, but he also begets children, through the crucified Son.

[1] John 19 : 34.

Sin is put away and life is communicated—life is laid down and life is imparted. He took our sin, and the death that was connected with it. He gives his own life and the holiness which it bears as the fruit of the Spirit.

We see here one of many illustrations of the divine perfections of the Word of God. Jesus *came* by water and blood to men ; but he *went* by blood and water to God. The order in which the command was given for the Tabernacle directed that the ark of the covenant should be made first before the brazen altar. Jesus was in the bosom of the Father before he came to the death of the cross. So also the *arrangement* of the vessels of the Tabernacle shows the same order as symbols of truth. Coming out from the Most Holy Place, the water of the laver must be passed before reaching the blood of the altar ; but in returning, the blood came first and afterward the water. The *reality* of what is taught in these *types* was fulfilled when Jesus came forth *from* God and returned *to* God. In the power of the Life as set forth by the water, he came from God, the holy One, bearing our sins in his own body up to the altar of the cross. Here sins were put away in his blood and then he returned to the face of God in the victory of the same spotless life taken again. The living One came from God to die ; but the One who died returns to God, alive for evermore. "We were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, shall we be saved in his life."

Now these three witnesses—the Spirit, the water, and

the blood—give a testimony. What is their testimony? What have they to say? They all agree and make for *one end*. They converge on Christ, come in the flesh, with the gift of life to impart to us. The whole gospel, on which they concentrate in their witness, stands for three aspects of the one truth. This truth is (1) that Jesus is the Son of God come in the flesh of man; (2) that the life of the ages can find no channel in which it comes to our hearts except through the death of this Son; and (3) that this life comes to us only when we, owning the depth of our sin, receive this Son of God, whose resources are equal to our imperative and varied needs.

This is the witness which God gives concerning his Son. It is three-fold, and satisfies the condition of human testimony. We receive human testimony out of the mouth of two or three witnesses. Human witnesses may be deceived, and they may deceive us. God can neither deceive nor be deceived, and he speaks through these things to us. This witness of God is, therefore, of greater authority than that of man. It was three-fold, was open and visible to the world, and the One whose mission was attested is a living power in the world to-day. This is God's final testimony. If we receive the fallible testimony of man, what possible excuse can we give for refusing the infallible testimony of God?

The whole witness is, life given to us in the Son of God. If we possess the Son, we possess life. And "he that believeth on the Son hath the witness in him." This may refer to some experience of confidence, which

the Holy Ghost works in all believers, whereby they cry "Abba Father," and whereby they "call Jesus Lord." It *may* mean this. The whole tenor of the book, however, points to another view. The one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ has the witness *in him, that is, in Christ.* Christ risen from the dead is himself a testimony to our acceptance, if we put our trust in him. The witness to the whole truth is a risen Christ, at the right hand of the Father. While Jesus is *there,* God sanctions every claim that he made while *here.* One claim was that every one trusting in him *is* forgiven and *has* eternal life. His presence before the face of God is the divine witness that this is true.

Then follows a startling sentence that should cause us all to pause before doubting a single utterance from the mouth of God. "*He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.*" How this takes one's breath! In the original, the force of the words implies a *refusal* to believe. When one refuses God's testimony concerning his Son, and therefore refuses to cast himself entirely upon him, he is not only rejecting God in this testimony, but also impeaching his character for veracity. He not only refuses to believe what God says, but this refusal makes God *false,* a deceiver, a liar. Will *God* tolerate being *made* a liar by a *man,* whose heart is deceitful above all things? What sort of a place would heaven be to a man who in his heart makes God a liar? "He that hath received his witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true." Let us hasten to receive the witness of God and thus set our seal to his unquestioned

veracity, lest we become guilty of the awful sin of making God a liar.

To all of this it is added, that "*God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in his Son,*" and we obtain this life by believing in his name. About forty times in John's Gospel, life is said to be obtained by faith in Christ, but only *once* here in this Epistle. It is assumed that the persons to whom John writes, have already believed. Then he adds, "*He that hath the Son hath the life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.*" If God has given us life in Christ, then it follows that, if we have Christ we have also what God has put in him—eternal life. If we do not accept Christ, we do not have the life. So that our Christianity is perpetual faith in a person and not the acceptance of a creed.

The Father, the words and the works of Christ, the Scriptures, John the Baptist, and the disciples, all bear their testimony that Jesus is the Son of God. But God has appointed *the Spirit, the water, and the blood* to bear witness. They bear official witness to Christ, and point out how he is related to us in accomplishing our redemption. The Spirit, the water, and the blood are three complete testimonies. What was accomplished by Christ, in his entrance upon his ministry by water, and in his exit by blood, are still visible. To reject these witnesses is to make God a liar and to reject his Son. "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." This ends the doctrinal part of the Epistle of John.

CHAPTER XVII

CLOSING WORDS

1 John 5 : 13–21

We now come to the final touches of this instructive picture. Every part examined has been full of the richest meaning.

We began with a revelation of the unseen life of God, made certain to the senses of men. There was no mistake about that. Out of this revelation came the searching light, revealing man's inbred sin and God's grace for its cleansing. Here too, we were taught forgiveness on earth through confession, and a fixed standing in heaven through the righteous Advocate. Then we saw that, if we confess fellowship with this revelation, we ought to walk in harmony with its genius and in accordance with its provisions. Glancing still farther on, we had the whole of our surroundings unfolded, and we were commanded not to covet the world, for it will pass away, but to do the will of God, that we may abide to the remotest age. False teachers were next unveiled, and we were shown how they tend to lead us astray ; but we were assured that the unction of the Spirit would preserve us from their deadly errors. At the next point, the climax of the coming glory was for a moment set before us, and we learned that our present standing, as children in the family of God, will finally be recognized,

when we are admitted to his presence and are made like him in his nature. As this vision faded away, we were told that every one having this hope "purifieth himself even as he is pure." This threw us back upon ourselves, and we were instructed how to continue in a righteous course, through Christ, who was manifested to disentangle us from the power of the devil. Then we were exhorted not to marvel if we met with the world's hatred. God's love toward us should lead to the practice of righteousness and to the ministry of love, in spite of this hatred. This persistent continuance in the path of love gives assurance in our hearts, boldness toward God, and the answer to prayer. Moreover, obedience in these things fulfills the whole command of God, which is to believe his Son and to love one another. At this point we had another secret committed to our keeping —we abide in God, and we know the fact by the Spirit given to us. But there are other spirits of a different nature, and they are to be tested by their confession or denial of Christ having come in the flesh. Then came a picture of the whole family dwelling in love, because God is love. Having revealed this great fact of God's nature, then we saw the manner of this love, coming to the world, coming to give life, coming to put away sin, coming into our hearts, and there, loving its own love through us, toward the sons of men. In this way the *love of God* was made perfect in its manifestation in us. But this love, taking its seat in our hearts, places us upon the throne of his glory, side by side with the Son of God. It casts out all fear, and *we* are thus made per-

fect in the same love. God's love became perfect in us as its sphere of manifestation and we are made perfect in the realm of its ripened results—love perfected in us and we in it. But again we were brought back to the children in the family, begotten of God, and spontaneously loving their Father—to the children, who bear his likeness. Love to the children proved love to the Father and love to the Father implied love to the children. Then we were shown how this family overcame the world, obtaining life and entering upon a victory already achieved by faith in Christ as the Son of God. The claims of this Son were shown to rest upon three witnesses, under the appointment and acknowledgment of God—the Spirit, the water, and the blood. These were the seals which the Father placed upon his Son.

And now for the closing words. The Revised version is correct here and its translation removes difficulties. John tells us that he is writing to those who believe, that they may *know* that they have eternal life. In the Gospel, he writes that they may *believe*, and that they may have life in the believing. Here, he begins where he had previously ended. This life of the ages, or eternal life, revealed and obtained in Christ, the believer has in present possession. He may not be fully conscious of its existence, but he has it none the less. The fruit may be delayed, or, in his blindness, he may not be able to recognize its character. The life may be still in a germinal condition, or its possessor may not have been instructed as to the signs of its existence, and these things John seeks to meet.

Spiritual life is fellowship with God. It includes fellowship with man, and we come to its possession in the reception of Christ. Life, as a fountain, is in the Father; it flows to us in the Son, and we know it is ours upon the authority of the word of God.

This knowledge gives us "boldness toward God." It is the very phrase used to express the nearness and intimacy of Jesus as "the Word with God" in the beginning. With God,[1] or toward God (*προς τον θεον, pros ton theon*). Man in the beginning went out from the presence of God, but Jesus was toward God before the foundation of the world. And now we are brought back to the bosom of the Father, where Jesus was from the beginning. Jesus went out and came back, and, in the coming, brought the "many sons" with him.

Wonderful grace—to reach so far and to bring so near, to stoop so low and to raise so high. It follows, as a matter of course, that what we ask, according to his will, is heard and our petitions are answered. With such nearness to God we make his will our will, and then he who works all things after the counsel of his own will, must work in the line of our prayers. If we know God's will perfectly, and acquiesce in it cheerfully, it will be impossible to ask what he is unwilling to grant. All our asking will be in the line of his generous giving and mighty working.

But here again, as soon as we are brought face to face with God, we are also brought immediately into

[1] Προς denotes proximity, it indicates an active relation, a felt and personal communion. The Word was in relation with God.—*Godet.*

contact with the *brother*. Our holiest hours of prayer and worship should be marked by benevolence toward our brethren. "*If any one see his brother sinning a sin that is not toward death* (*πρὸς θάνατον—pros thanaton*), *he shall ask of God.*" The brother, or the one who has the standing of a brother, may take a course which looks toward death. In that case, we may ask, and God will give him life. This is in the case of the one *not* sinning a sin unto death ; for there is a sin unto death, and John does not encourage us to pray for the one engaged in *that* kind of sin. However, he does not forbid it, but he assumes that if a man persists in taking a course that leads to death, why, death it will be.

Then he puts in a little definition, that every departure from that which is straight, upright, or exactly right, is sin, or literally, is missing the mark. It is coming short of the end, failing to attain unto the will and purpose of God. This departure may be internal as well as external—in thought and desire as well as in speech and act. It is sin in the eye of God, even before it is expressed in the acts and words of man. But while this is true, every sin is not unto death.

The "*sin unto death*" has been the cause of no little curious speculation. Much may be said in favor of two views. One is, that *spiritual* death is here meant. The word translated death is used twice in the early part of this Epistle, and it clearly means spiritual death in both places. What is put in contrast with death is life. The word here translated life is used in no less

than ten other places in this very Epistle, and in every case it means eternal or spiritual life. There is another word, meaning natural life, which is used twice in this Epistle. It would seem that if John meant natural life here, he would have used that word. But he has not done so. The apostle, moreover, has just been speaking of eternal life in the thirteenth verse, and he goes on to speak of it again in the twentieth verse. If a different kind of life were meant, it would be natural to expect him to indicate it by the use of a different word, elsewhere used for natural life. Moreover, John uses the word here translated life (*ζωή—zoe*) thirty-four times in his Gospel, and always to designate the spiritual or eternal life. He speaks of natural life eight times in his Gospel and always uses another word (*ψυχή—psuche*). In the book of Revelation an examination reveals the same habit in the use of these two words.

The word (*ζωή—zoe*) which is found here, is always used for eternal life in the Scriptures. This would seem to determine what is meant by the sin unto death. A man may sin and yet that sin may not involve an absolute apostasy from Christ, and so would not involve spiritual death. But, if one should sin in such a way that it involves apostasy from Christ and makes repentance and forgiveness impossible, it is unto death. This is the sense in which Heb. 6 : 4–6 is explained. Of course, one who in the fullest sense is the child of God cannot sin in this way. One who is apparently a child, but who in reality is under the dominion of the world and not of God, may so sin. This is in harmony with

the second chapter, where certain persons, who seemed to be of the truth, were yet not truly of it. Their going out was simply a manifestation of their real character. "They went out from us, because they were not of us." It would seem, therefore, that there was a possibility of being illuminated—a possibility of having the power of eternal life moving in the soul, and yet of being in imminent peril. A man, however, who is fully into the kingdom, born again, would seem to be safe; nevertheless, "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Now this is one view, and indeed it seems to be the correct view. But there is another that has much to commend it. According to this interpretation we must understand the word death to mean physical and literal death. An English reader, not having the force of the Greek words before him, would possibly adopt this view. It is the one that seems to lie on the surface. It finds many illustrations, both in the Old Testament and in the New. For example, it is by no means certain that the Jews who perished in the wilderness were all lost; but it is certain that they died and never entered the promised land. Again, after the nation entered, Achan was cut off because of his sin, but he was not necessarily lost. Similarly, in the New Testament, at the establishment of the church, Ananias and Sapphira were cut off, but there is no certainty that they were eternally banished from God. There were many people in those days who lied far worse, and yet they were allowed to live. We see in the eleventh chapter of First Corin-

thians that many of the disorderly, drinking persons were on beds of sickness, as a matter of discipline, and some had even "fallen asleep." The apostle explains very distinctly, that they were judged and chastened by the Lord in *this life*, that they might not be condemned with the world in the great day that is yet to come. The possibility of physical death is thought by some to be what John was teaching here, but it does not commend itself to our judgment.

Very much has been written on this passage, growing out of the Romish distinction between venial and mortal sins. Perhaps there is no doctrine that Roman Catholics have used to serve base and sinful ends more than this. They have a catalogue of the sins that are deadly and the sins that are venial. It is enough to say that the Bible furnishes no such catalogue. The penances and compoundings of the Romish Church are selfish contrivances to avoid punishment; to buy off God's anger on the one hand, and to enrich the coffers of the church on the other. In this way good and evil in the end lose their distinct qualities. Such a doctrine leads to perplexity and trickery and to the worship of money. What a degrading effect it has upon bishops and priests who play fast and loose with souls by their abominable perversion of the word of God, no one can fully know. The recently published life of Cardinal Manning, however, is a terrible disclosure of some of its deadly influences.

Whatever this sin may be, it is not a sin that can be recognized and definitely named, for any sin or all sin,

if confessed, can be forgiven. As spiritual death is separation from God, it follows very naturally that the sin mentioned here is a condition and a habit, and not any specific act. It is a state of mind and heart, ending in separation from God.

From this point the apostle proceeds to speak of certain things *we know*. He uses this term four times in these closing verses. *First*, we know that the one who is begotten of God sinneth not—or as we have already seen, *does not habitually* or characteristically sin. Then follows, "*but he that was begotten of God keepeth himself* [1] *and the evil one toucheth him not.*"

"He that is begotten of God" has his mind and understanding enlightened by the "word," which was used in the begetting his new life, and by the Holy Spirit, who imparted the life through "the incorruptible seed" of the word. Moreover, the new life has its own instincts and tendencies, and to it also "self-preservation is the first law of nature." By means of these new impulses, called the "new heart," the one who has had a second begetting—who has been born again—is alive to his own spiritual interests and "keepeth himself"—observeth himself—with a view to the preservation and development of his new life derived from God. The thought here is different from "guard" as used in the last verse, where reference is made to external foes.

[1] This is practically the only instance in which the author has ventured to differ from Westcott. Nearly every MS. authority except Codex B. gives ἑαυτον (*eauton*) and not ἀυτον (*auton*), *himself* and not *him*, and seven of the ancient versions follow the same reading. The overwhelming balance of authority favors *himself*.

John has in view a careful observation of self and sinful tendencies, "so that the evil one toucheth him not," that is, does not mar and defile him through these impulses. The child of God may fall and sin grievously, but he will not habitually continue in a sinning path. The child of God may be *attacked* by the devil, but the evil one cannot lay his hands upon him except by the permission of the Lord.[1] As the unseen glass keeps the fly safe from the attack of the bird, so the unseen Christ protects the Christian in his walk and way.

Again, *we know* that we are of God and that the whole world—the whole of organized society, alienated from and opposed to God—is in all of its parts and elements under the dominion of Satan. This is an extraordinary, but an absolutely true, statement. We are born of God ; the life which we possess is from God ; every mercy and every gift which we now have is from God ; all our expectations and all our hopes are from him. This is just as true of the poor, weak child of God as of the ripe and mellow Christian.

We are not all matured alike in holiness and love, but we are all alike of God, as the plant is of the seed. We are united to God in spiritual life and have become members of his family. In like manner, all men in the world, out of Christ, and not born again, are not equally vicious and dishonest, false and unclean, but *they are all alike in the kingdom of the evil one.* Their world, their hopes, their purposes, and their plans are in accordance with his wishes.

[1] Luke 22 : 31, 32.

Now, there is a third thing *we know*. What we know in this case is only imparted to us, however, that we may know something else—the highest and the most divine thing that may come to the understanding of man. We know that the Son of God has come and has given us *an understanding*. A better rendering would be insight, or to be still more exact, a through and through knowledge. We have power to penetrate things, to understand them *as they really are*. In the spiritual realm we have had given to us what the X-ray is in the sphere of matter. We are able to trace out the complex facts and mysteries of life and to arrive at right conclusions. This gift is doubtless through the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, who guides us into all truth. He has entered our hearts, giving us this penetrating insight that *we may come to know*, by a continuous and progressive apprehension, "*him that is true.*" "That I may know him," said Paul, long after he had become a believer. Thus, outwardly to our senses, we have a person revealed; inwardly to our consciousness, we have a personal revelation, and this opens the eyes of our understanding so that "*we know*" the Person who is true. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are here, although neither is mentioned by name. The Son makes the revelation; the Spirit whom he gives, furnishes the illumination; and the everlasting God, even the Father, becomes known to our hearts. "This is eternal life that they may know thee, the only true God." *Blessed knowledge this!* We know that the one begotten of God does not practise sin; we know that

we are of God, while the world lies in the evil one ; and we know that Jesus has come, and has given us a clearness of perception, that by this means we may know the real and true God. We are back to God and we know *him*, better than we know any man—*better than we can know ourselves.*

There are two words translated "true" and "truth," in John's Gospel. One word means true, as opposed to all that is false ; the other, which is used here, means genuine, as opposed to adulterated. He is the real One, as distinguished from idols and all false gods ; the genuine One, as distinguished from the dreams of man's fancy ; the real One, as opposed to deities having no existence in the actual world, but are creatures of the imagination. *He is the real One*, fulfilling, not merely his *word*, but *every promise of his character and of his being.* He fills and satisfies the highest conception of the Godhead possible to man who was made in the image of God. He is the real One, hating hypocrisies and shams and dispelling shadows and delusions. Through Christ, we know the *genuine* God.

But more than this, "we are in him that is true." And we are in him because we are "in his Son, Jesus Christ." Our union with Christ is union with God. He took the likeness of sinful flesh, that he might dwell in man. He imparted to us his divine life, that we might dwell in God.

"*This is the true God and eternal life.*" Does this refer to Christ or to the Father—to the Revealer or to the Revealed One ? It matters little which view is taken

so far as the deity of Christ is concerned. Only God can fully make God known. But the natural interpretation suggests that we refer it to the Father. He is to us the true God, and the fountain of eternal life, the final *end* and *aim* of all knowing, feeling, and willing. He is the only true and real One, without beginning, without end, and without darkness—always living, always holy, and always loving. Nay, he *is Life*, he *is Light*, and he *is Love*. Through the Son he approaches us and we approach him, and thus we know him as the Father of the Son and the Father of us who live through the Son. This Being, this One who is true, who is revealed through and in his Son, and with whom we are united by his Son, is the true God and Life Eternal. This is the climax of the argument. We have reached the real and genuine God, and the Life common to all the Ages—the Life from which all other lives have come into existence. Beyond this we cannot go.

Very naturally John turns from considering the *true One* to the *empty shadows* that usurp his place in the thoughts and hearts of men, and gives his closing pastoral exhortation. The evil one asserted his power on every side. He forced himself before the children of God by innumerable shapes. By this means, they were tempted to fall away from the simple, but sublime knowledge and fellowship, upon which the whole book had dwelt. Knowledge of God, through the revelation made by Christ, and the love of man, through the life which he has given, are the essence of all that he has written.

We can come into contact with God through Jesus Christ and through him alone. Any turning away from him is turning to idolatry. "*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*" The idols are figures of imaginary deities as contrasted with the real God. *Made with hands,* they become part of a gross and well-known superstition; *formed in thought* and imagination, they become objects of affection. And in the latter case, they are just as untrue and degrading as in the former. The Thessalonians turned to the living and real God from these idols, and the Corinthians were saved from "dumb idols" to the service of God, who spake *to* them and *through* them.

> "Whatever comes like a cloud between,
> The eye of faith and things unseen—
> This is our idol, e'en though it wear,
> Religion's aspect and devotion's air."

The term used here does not mean that we shall keep ourselves from where idols are, but so to place ourselves, that the idols cannot come where we are; that is, where our thoughts and affections are. "Guard yourselves from idols." All through the Epistle John has been testifying that Jesus Christ was the manifestation of God himself. If we receive him as the manifestation of *that Life,* as God in the flesh, and therefore as God, and if we cling to him, and have no other object of worship before our hearts, there will be no possibility of idols coming before our minds.

The word translated "keep" is only used three times

by John. In John 12 : 25 our Lord says, "he that hateth his life in this world shall *keep* it unto life eternal." The corn of wheat, despised and scattered, returns with much fruit, and fittingly represents the way *eternal* life is kept by disregarding the claims of the *present* life. Again, Jesus says, "I guarded (*kept*) them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition." Peter uses the same term with regard to Noah in the ark. "God preserved (*kept*) Noah, a preacher of righteousness, when he sent a flood upon the world of the unrighteous." God put Noah into the ark, and he was guarded and saved in the midst of the raging heavens and the overwhelming floods. It is the same word which is translated variously in the New Testament by kept, guarded, and preserved. Here we are exhorted to guard ourselves from idols, in the midst of ten thousand dangers. We do this first by realizing that we are in the true One, even in his Son, Jesus Christ. And secondly, by having our hearts stayed upon him, so that there is no room for any idol to find a lodging-place within us.

The noun of this verb translated "*keep*" is commonly translated prison. God saved Noah by putting him into the prison of the ark. Now, then, we are to imprison ourselves in thought and experience in Christ and in the truth which we have received concerning him. It is to this, in part, that Paul refers when he says, "I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ." If we are in the prison provided for us in Christ, no devil nor idol can break through its defense. We are hid with

Christ in God. We have a double protection. We are in Christ, and that would seem enough. But grace always abounds. *He* is in *God*, and *we*, being *in him*, *are there too*. We are the genuine enthusiasts—the men who are truly enfolded in God. We thank God for the prison in which we live, for the keeper by whom we are guarded, and for the everlasting palace to which we are going. We are *sealed unto the day of redemption* —unto the appropriation of what has already been redeemed.

Hosea closes his remarkable prophecy by giving a picture of Israel when finally and fully redeemed from the fatal sin of idolatry. At the last, this "perverse nation" will come to say, "What have I to do with idols? I have heard and observed *him*." To have heard and understood Jehovah was to break with idols forever. We have heard, seen, gazed upon, and handled *him* who is the real God—him who is the outshining of the glory and the exact image of the essential nature of God. What have we to do with the emptiness of the idol when we have the fullness of the Father —God? To us the idol is nothing, whether molded by man's hands or conceived by men's hearts.

What a wonderful closing—so simple and yet so profound! How it fits into a still more sublime beginning! How it meets the first great need of the world to have a knowledge of the only true God! Men always and everywhere have believed in some One somewhere who is over and above all things everywhere. To fill this vague conception and yet deep conviction, idols

have been invented and worshiped. But in this book John tells of the *real God*, who determined all, who made all, who rules over all, and who redeemed all in and by his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the *true God and eternal life;* therefore, beloved children, keep yourselves from false, unreal, and degrading idols. Oh, the matchless wisdom and love of God! So sacred and dear to his heart is our highest good that he would not have our love, our loyalty, and our adoration given to any Being lower than himself—the Most High and Thrice Holy God! The true God has been revealed. There is no excuse for idols. Having seen him, there should be no desire for aught akin to them.

I have heard and seen and handled
Wondrous glory, rich and rare,
In his majesty and greatness,
And his grace beyond compare.

I am in the Light that shineth,
I am walking in its glow;
There I see the blood that cleanseth,
And the Love that keeps I know.

Now I know I'm dwelling in him
And I know he lives in me;
Here I find my richest treasure,
Till in glory him I see.

In my heart his love is burning,
Loving out its Godlike way,
"As he is" I now am reckoned—
"Shall be like him," in that day.

What have I to do with idols,
  Dwelling thus in him that's true?
How be occupied with shadows,
  With this Substance full in view?

As the stars fade in the morning,
  And the moon is merged in day,
So before his peerless glory
  Every idol fades away.

APPENDIX A

THE BLOOD CLEANSETH

It has been observed that the Gospel of John is constructed upon the mold of the tabernacle. The same is true of this Epistle. What is written up to the third verse of the second chapter corresponds to the Most Holy Place. The high priest once a year entered there, first with the burning incense so that he was enveloped in the fragrant cloud, and after that he entered again with the blood of atonement. This was sprinkled on the ground where *he* stood, and also on the mercy-seat where *God* rested. He was in the light of God's revealed glory, and was typically cleansed because of the blood on which God rested and on which he stood. When we walk, not in the outer court, where we may contract defilement, nor yet in the inner court, where we may be lights because we are like our Lord, but in the Holiest of all, where we are in communion with the undimmed light of God's infinite holiness, *then* we are cleansed by the blood of the Son of God, from the *sin* so conspicuously revealed by the light of God. As sure as the light leaves not a stain undiscovered, so sure is it that the blood leaves not a stain uncleansed—"cleanseth" from the whole of sin. Bear in mind, it

is not "sins"—not actual transgressions—that are under consideration here. It is, according to Paul, the "sin which dwelleth in me" from which the blood "cleanseth" so completely. God has found a resting-place in the blood of his Son, and on the ground of its redemption we stand in his presence completely cleansed from every defilement. "In the secret place of the Most High" we abide "under the shadow of the Almighty."

APPENDIX B

THE ADVOCATE

The Advocate has also a relation to Satan as "the accuser of our brethren." This is mysterious ground, and one can only speak of these things with reserve. But it looks as if Satan were a sort of prosecuting attorney in the court of heaven. When our Lord said, "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven," he probably referred to an event already past—the original casting of Satan from his glory in heaven at the time of his first sin. This happened before man was created. Jesus, speaking as the Eternal One, said: "Before Abraham was, I am," and as such, he saw the fall of Satan from his high estate.

At that time Satan was deprived forever of that condition of heavenly glory which, as an unfallen creature, he had possessed from the beginning of his existence. But after man had sinned, and after sin, both in man and in Satan, had been permitted to do its worst, then this evil spirit was still allowed to enter the courts of God's government. He enters apparently as the accuser of the saints. He professes to uphold the claims of righteousness, and under that guise he urges the action of justice against "the brethren." But we have

an Advocate who is able to say: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?" Our standing is secure in spite of failure on earth, and also in spite of accusation in heaven.

Of course this advocacy will not cease when the one who "accuseth the brethren before God day and night" is cast down, "and his angels with him." *Sin* will still be in the flesh, whether known or unknown by us, and that would require priestly intercession. Even the millennial saints, when Satan is "cast into the pit," will need intercession because "sin in the flesh" still remains in them. And during that mysterious period, "when the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time,"—that brief period between casting Satan down from heaven and shutting him into the pit,—the need will be still greater on the part of the children of God. It would seem that during that period Satan will no longer make his accusations against us, but the "wrestling" of saints with "wicked spirits" will still continue. Having no access to the courts of God does not drive Satan from the sphere of man. We now wrestle on earth "against evil spirits," admitted apparently into heavenly places for some mysterious purpose of grace. The wrestling will be intensified when the devil and his angels are cast out of this heavenly sphere, for they will have great wrath and great power "for a little season." Satan may continue during that brief period to be "the Prince of the power of the air" on earth, although no longer the "accuser of the breth-

ren in heaven." But they shall overcome them "because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony." From the prevalence of evil all over the world, it may be that we have already entered into the beginning of that mysterious period of trial. It may be that we are only entering into the twilight of that period of darkness.

APPENDIX C

ANTICHRIST

As John is the only writer of the Bible who uses the term Antichrist, and as nearly all he says of this personage is contained in his Second Epistle, it seems fitting that something further should be written here.

However much the thought of Antichrist has disappeared from the religious teaching of modern times, there is abundant evidence that a belief in the coming of this man was a part of the common faith from the earliest days of the church. A deep conviction seems to have obtained that at the *end* of this gospel age some great monster of evil would arise and pursue a course of abandoned wickedness and of unrelenting persecution against the church.

In this the faith of the Christians agreed with the conceptions of the Jews. The latter believed that immediately preceding the coming of the Messiah and his subsequent reign of righteousness there would be a concentration of the world's opposition under the leadership of a great enemy and that Jehovah would fight for his people out of Zion and crush all foes in this final conflict. Both Jew and Christian expected the culmination of godless opposition to the people of God to

be met by the personal coming of the Messiah. Under the guidance of the last great eschatological discourse of our Lord, as recorded in Matt. 24, the early church could not have thought otherwise, for the tribulation, the desecration of the temple, the appearance of false prophets and false Christs are all placed before the Second Advent.

The early Fathers always spoke of this Antichrist as a person and not a system. There would be principles of error, which existed in *germ* at the time of the apostles and which would mature and make the extraordinary career of this man a possibility. But they never wavered in their conviction that the Antichrist would be one single man. Accordingly, when Nero began his diabolical crimes and heartless persecutions, the belief quickly spread that he was the Antichrist. Even after his death there was a general belief that Nero was concealed in the East and that he would return, or if dead, that he would be raised again, take his place at the head of the Roman Empire, and wear out the lives of the saints with greater severity than ever. They made the Hebrew letters of his name give the mysterious number 666.

In the beginning of the third century Hippolytus wrote a treatise on the Antichrist which reflects the belief of his day. He identifies the historic Babylon on the Euphrates with the Babylon of Revelation, and gives no intimation that Rome was the city meant under that name in the Apocalypse. Of Daniel's image he says: "The golden head of the image—the lion—

were the Babylonians; the shoulders and arms—the bear—were the Persians and Medes; the belly and thighs of brass—the leopard—were the Greeks; the legs of iron—the stupendous and terrible beast—were the Romans, who now have power. The feet of iron and clay and the ten horns are 'powers to be' by and by. Another little horn that groweth up is the Antichrist that ariseth among them—that shameless and godless monarch." This author also identifies the Man of Sin of Second Thessalonians and the desolation of Matt. 24 with the Antichrist. This view was all but universal until the Alexandrian rationalists arose, and they made this opponent of Christ an abstraction, a skeptical tendency or principle and not an historic person. In the early part of the thirteenth century, Pope Innocent declared that the Saracens were Antichrist and Mohammed the false prophet, and some students still maintain that notion. The prevailing view, however, until the time of the Reformation was that there would be a personal Antichrist.

The Reformers, with the shameless and nameless crimes of the papacy before them, very naturally called the Roman Church the Apostasy and the pope the Antichrist. Indeed, before the Reformation, some holy men within the Roman Church did not hesitate to speak of the pope as Antichrist. The reasons which led the Reformers to designate the pope as the Antichrist, led many at the beginning of this century to apply this name to Napoleon. His latitudinarianism, professing to be a Roman in Europe and a Mohamme-

dan in Egypt ; his avowed purpose to restore Palestine to the Jews ; his determination to rebuild ancient Babylon and make it the capital of his empire ; his attempt to change times and customs ; his aim to revive the Roman Empire, with himself as the divine emperor at its head, and other startling projects, made many students of Scripture point to him as the incipient Antichrist. Indeed, sober and studious men still think that some of his "heirs" may yet fill the *rôle* of this great monarch. But whatever view men have had about the Antichrist, there has been a singular unanimity in believing that he would run his course just before the second advent of the Lord. In the whole of the Christian literature of the past, there does not seem to be a single intimation of a hope that the church would be removed from the earth before this monster would rise. In the early part of this nineteenth century, three men, at about the same time, began to teach that there would be a *secret* coming *for* the saints, and afterward a public appearing *with* the saints, and that during the time between these two events the Antichrist would come upon the scene. This is the prevailing view to-day among English Premillennialists, although it must be confessed few men whose scholarship would be recognized have ever given it hospitality.

The rise of this conception grew up naturally. They were leaders of the earnest and hungry souls who had been brought into light by the Haldanes and others. They discovered that the Reformation did not go far enough. It had taken up "justification by faith alone,"

and kindred truths, and vindicated them. There remained, however, the presence and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the personal and imminent coming of the Lord, and other truths still obscured by Roman rubbish. This great *hope* took such possession of these men that it became their absorbing theme. They boldly stated that they were issuing the midnight cry, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," and it was whispered that the greatest of their leaders "would not taste of death" until the Lord should come. Any reference to signs or intervening events was frowned upon, and those daring to speak of them were ostracised. Such thoughts seemed to them to put something between the hearts of the saints and the coming of the Lord. They had passed out from making *nothing* of the second coming to making *everything* of that doctrine. It seems hard for the best of men to hold truth, in its many bearings and relations, evenly balanced.

This *new* point of view required an adjustment of Scriptures that did not seem congenial to it. The Old Testament prophets were easily disposed of, for the "church," as such, was unknown—it was a mystery revealed unto "the holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit." The eschatological discourse given to the apostles after leaving the Jewish people, the Holy City, and the temple for the last time, and which outlined the course of the Antichrist, was thrown out as Jewish. Indeed, the whole of Matthew's Gospel was set aside as belonging to Jews and not to Christians. Second Thessalonians had been written to a Christian church, and

that too, said the Lord could not come "until the man of sin was revealed." This was entirely set aside, because Paul spoke of the coming *for* the saints in the first Epistle and of course "that day" of the second must refer to some subsequent event. There remained the fact that it is not unscriptural to look for *intervening events* to precede the Advent, for both Peter and Paul had it revealed to them that they would not live to see the Lord return and they also taught others to be on the watch for coming evils, which they definitely named, as sure to appear after they had passed away. It was easy to reply that eighteen centuries had fulfilled all these predictions and nothing was now left but the midnight testimony, then the secret coming and rapture, the closed door, and the wedding feast.

There seems to be a tendency of late to take up the whole question of the Antichrist from a broader and more scriptural point of view. Not as affected by Rome, or by the Napoleonic dynasty, or by the devastations of Mohammedanism, but solely from the teachings of Scripture must this question be considered. This may put events of the most important bearing as yet to intervene both before Christ comes to bless or the Antichrist arises to persecute. Our business is to mark, learn, believe, and obey every "thus saith the Lord."

The Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, the Beast, and the Antichrist, are terms variously used in the New Testament, while many other significant names are employed in the prophets. He will arise *after* the old

Roman Empire, East and West, is revived and divided into ten distinct kingdoms. Four of these kingdoms, according to Dan. 8, will correspond exactly to the four divisions of Alexander's dominions after he died. Once these ten kingdoms are formed, they continue until the end comes. The political capital of that empire will not be Rome but Babylon, and the religious center of the man at its head will be Jerusalem. Both the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New give warnings against the seductions of this great enemy of the saints. From this, it is fair to infer that both Jews and Christians will be concerned in his persecutions. It would seem that there must first be a prevalence of antichristian principles, then their incorporation in the commercial development of the Euphratan Valley, and after that the spirit of lawlessness incorporated in a personal Antichrist will speedily appear. The present absolute control of all national policies and plans throughout the civilized world by the interests of commerce indicate how certain it is that the Turkish Empire must yield to the "open door" treatment and admit the principles of Western civilization into its Eastern division of untold possibilities. It will then be divided into three more parts in the interest of commerce.

But we must be careful not to look too much at Rome and at nations without any conscience, impelled by lust of gold and greed of gain, for the germs of antichristian lawlessness. "In the latter times some shall depart (*apostatize*) from the faith." This does

not mean departure from Christianity in some loose sense, but from *that faith* which unites a sinner to Christ. That is, they will take other grounds than those fixed by God, on which he justifies the sinner. Then follows a description in 1 Tim. 4 of the characteristics of this apostasy, and its essence is an attempt to superadd something of our own to the righteousness of God which cometh of faith. When the gospel was first preached the blood of Christ was the only ground of blessing to the believing sinner, and good works were but the fruit growing out of this root of grace. Even to press obedience to the holy commandments of God, as something added to faith in order to justification, has in it the *principle* of the final apostasy. This is certainly "apostasy from faith," and this feature is not confined to the teachings of Rome and Rationalists. Nearly the whole of the literature and pulpit utterances of modern Protestantism have the same tendency. Hence the preaching about ethics and the severe contrasts drawn between ethical and forensic justification, much to the discredit of the latter. Protestants, with rare exceptions, are abandoning the keystone of the arch of their faith in "departing from the faith" of the Reformers, the martyrs, and the apostles.

Now when this becomes universal, then Christ is degraded to the level of other great teachers, and all faiths must be put upon the same basis. It will only require one step more to frown upon the whole system of religious belief, to put in its place the material interests and commercial progress of the world, and

then to exalt the interests of mankind as the supreme thing, and then to have some Agamemnon—some king of men—arise with a revival of all the splendor of the greatest men of all ages, and he will oppose every object of worship and put himself in the place of the vacuum created by a denial of both the Father and the Son. He will take possession of that which belongs to Christ as the object of worship for the church, as the king of Israel and as the lord of the world. When he reaches that climax his path to earthly glory will mark his hour of judgment and sudden fall into perdition. It follows that this Antichrist, or supplanter of Christ—acting against Christ because he seeks to fill his place—will seek to be accepted as the Messiah of the Jews, the Supreme Lord of the Christians, and the King of the nations. The Jews, the apostate Christians, and the Gentile Nations will all have their part in the exaltation of this Man of Sin "whom the Lord Jesus shall destroy with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming."

I am glad to make the following quotation from the learned Dr. S. P. Tregelles, who passed away a few years ago :

> There is a passage which speaks of one definite enemy of Christ, concerning whom the saints are warned. The Apostle John says : "As ye have heard that [*the*] *Antichrist* shall come, even now are there many antichrists ; whereby we know that it is the last time."[1] Again, in 4 : 3, he describes this "Antichrist" : "He is *Antichrist* who denieth the Father and the Son."[2] Again the spirit of Antichrist is

[1] 2 : 18. [2] 2 : 22.

spoken of as denying Jesus Christ come [ἐληλυθότα] in the flesh; and, in 2 John 7, Antichrist is said to be one who denies Jesus Christ *coming* [ἐρχόμενον] in the flesh. If this be the character of an antichrist, how much more must it be that of *the* Antichrist, the great opposer of the Lord? Antichrist may, in fact, be taken as a descriptive name of this person; and I do not question but that he individually is the one pointed out by the Spirit of God through the apostle.

I know full well that this is a fearful picture, to see the whole course of the world going on until the whole is headed up in this person, who shall set himself up against God; who shall rule over the Jews when returned to their land in unbelief, like the unclean spirit to his empty house;[1] and not over the Jews only, but also over all tongues, people, and languages; and this dominion not merely temporal, but likewise, through the energy of Satan, that which claims the honors due to God. All this is fearful; and yet, if we would estimate the glory of the Lord Jesus aright, we must know what will be the height of that wickedness which he will destroy at his coming.

Many of the portions of the word have been explained away, or applied to subjects to which, in their detailed statement, they were by no means rightly applicable. I speak this confidently, because nothing which has ever been has at all met these descriptions of evil and of blasphemy. Take, for instance, that which is written in Dan. 11: 45, "He shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain," compared with 2 Thess. 2: "He shall sit in *the temple of God*." Now to what can this expression apply? "The temple of God" is used in Scripture of but three things: 1. The actual temple at Jerusalem. 2. The bodies of individual saints.

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[1] Matt. 12.

3. The *true* spiritual church of God, the elect. Now it is evident that it is only in the first of these three that Antichrist can actually sit; and thus the place spoken of to Daniel, "the glorious holy mountain," coinciding with "the temple of God" in 2 Thess., indicates a certain fact which has never had a semblance of a fulfillment. There it is that this oppressor will sit; there will he be worshiped by all whose names are not written in the book of life of the slain Lamb. This alone would be one indication that these prophecies cannot be applied aright to the pope; and remember also that in Rev. 13 : 8 it is plainly said that "ALL shall worship him" except the elect. Now there have been, and there are, many wicked who have never acknowledged papal authority in the least, but the very terms of the prediction show that none (at least within his territorial sphere) shall be excepted from joining in this worship save the elect of God. All others will acknowledge Antichrist as God. These two facts—the place and the extent of his power—show that neither the papacy nor anything else which is or has been can be identified with the Man of Sin, even though in some features a resemblance may be traced.

The following summary statement may be helpful in a study of this subject:

1. The Beast with ten horns is distinctly a secular power (Rev. 13 : 1–9). Popery has always been ecclesiastical, and its power has always been confined to the Western division of Rome, while the Beast includes the whole of that world as the sphere of his influence.

2. This same person under another name is seen as the last head of Gentile authority in the world, and he continues his reign until the Lord comes (Dan. 7).

3. When he rises he is first received by the Jews and then he persecutes them until the Lord delivers them (Dan. 8, 9).

4. He will exalt himself to be worshiped in the rebuilt temple at Jerusalem (2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13).

5. He will rise out of that part of the Roman world included in the four divisions of Alexander's Empire. He will destroy three of the ten kings of the Roman world, and then his rule will be owned (Dan. 7, 8, 9).

6. His power will be derived from Satan (2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13).

7. He will gather all the force of the world against the Lamb and will then come to his doom (2 Thess. 2; Rev. 19).

8. The mystery of iniquity which now works secretly will be developed out of the midst (ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται). Then, when this iniquity begins to act openly, the Antichrist will ride into power upon the crest of its wave (2 Thess. 2 : 1–10).

9. This Beast will be helped by a false prophet, to whom Satan will give power to work miracles (Rev. 13 : 11–16).

10. This Antichrist will have supreme control of all commerce within the bounds of his own dominion (Rev. 13 : 16–18).

11. The mold of truth as seen in all the creeds of Christendom is as follows, and so far as the author knows there is not a single exception : Apostasy, Antichrist, Tribulation, Advent. This is the order which

they give. These are the things before us say all the creeds, Greek, Roman, Anglican, and Protestant. The Scriptures teach the same order. "The morning cometh and the night also." "It shall be so. Come, Lord Jesus."

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